





THE NEGRO QUESTION IN THE UNITED STATES

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THE
NEGRO QUESTION
IN THE
UNITED STATES

by James S. Allen



INTERNATIONAL
PUBLISHERS
New York

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First Printing, April, 1936
Second Printing, June, 1936

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INTRODUCTION

IN this book an attempt is made to define the nature of the Negro question in the United States. The emphasis is principally upon those economic phenomena which are most germane to an understanding of the historical background and the present foundation of the oppression of the Negro people.

We are concerned here primarily with those specific features which account for the super-exploitation and repression of the Negro, rather than with exploitation and oppression in general under capitalism, from which the Negro suffers in common with white workers and farmers. The factors which have created the Negro question are basically economic, and serve as the foundation for the social and ideological system which excludes the Negro from the body politic.

No attempt is made in this book to give a descriptive survey of the present conditions of the Negro people nor to recount the social and political abuses of which they are victims. These aspects of the problem are treated in numerous books and pamphlets and in the current Negro and labor press. The author has sought to explain the state of affairs and to present a solution based upon an investigation of those economic laws and tendencies which have brought about the present situation. He fully realizes the complexity of the problem and does not pretend to have done more than to reveal the real core of the question.

This line of investigation must inevitably lead to the South. Nine and a half million Negroes still live there. It was only in a comparatively recent period that the migration into the North occurred and proved to be of temporary duration. The migration changed the situation by increasing the importance of the Negro question in the North and altering the relationship of class forces involved in the movement for Negro liberation. Without in the least underestimating the role of the Negro

in the North and the urgency of his specific problems, the author believes that the real essence of the Negro question can only be uncovered by an analysis of the structure of southern society and its relationship to the body of capitalism in the country as a whole. This analysis will illuminate not only the specifically southern problems associated with the Negro question but the situation of the Negro in the North as well.

The Negro question is not isolated or self-contained, any more than the creation of this problem is the result of a course of development which affected only the Negro and left untouched other sections of the population. It is necessary to relate the tasks of Negro liberation to the most pressing problems of the present period.

The task we have undertaken in this book demands primarily an investigation of the agrarian economy and the peculiar features of industrial development in the South. In treating these subjects it has been necessary to begin with the preceding historical stage in southern development—the period of Civil War and Reconstruction—to discover how chattel slavery left its imprint so deeply upon the South. The survivals of slavery, both in their economic and social form, remain the basic peculiarity of the South and determine in the main the character of the Negro question. Decades of capitalist development have failed to obliterate the remnants of the slave society, passing on to other forces the task of destroying the slave survivals and transforming the South from a semi-slave society into a popular democracy. This transformation is integrated with the liberation of the Negro.

This peculiar feature of American capitalism has not been adequately treated hitherto and it was therefore necessary to devote much of our attention to the problem. The first five chapters are concerned with a phenomenon unique to the South—the plantation economy and the Black Belt, inseparable aspects of a single phenomenon: the economic survival of chattel slavery. To demonstrate this point and to show its relation to monopoly capitalism is the key aim of the analytical part of this book. For it establishes the specific bourgeois-democratic aspect of a social transformation of American society and demonstrates the most unique native feature of the socialist revolution in this country.

Why have not industrialization in the South and the rapid growth of industry in the rest of the country since the Civil War been accompanied by an agrarian transformation in the South? This question is answered in Chapters VI and VII, where the relation of the plantation economy and the Black Belt to industry is treated. Here it is shown that the semi-slave agrarian economy conditioned and shaped industrialization in the South and prevented the free participation of the Negro in the progressive phases of capitalist development. The effect of this upon the Negro proletariat in the North and South and upon its relation to the working class as a whole is discussed. Also treated here are other problems created by the peculiarities of southern industrialization and by the mass migration of the Negroes into the North.

The status of the Negro middle class and the reasons for its retarded economic development are treated in Chapter VIII

The concluding chapters are devoted to defining the status of the Negro people as that of an oppressed nation, and to an elucidation of the program of equal rights, including the right of self-determination. Here especially the author hopes that he will not be misunderstood. If so much attention is devoted to explaining the meaning of the right of self-determination it is because this aspect of the question has been so generally misinterpreted. Preoccupation with this problem may appear as an evasion of the more immediate equal rights which can be won by a popular movement at the present time—such rights as are demanded by the American Negro Congress which concluded its first yearly session February last.

To create such an impression is the furthest from the author's intention. The relationship between the movement for equal rights for Negroes throughout the country and the right of self-determination is similar to the relationship of immediate demands to a more ultimate program. In raising the demand for self-determination as the aim of the Negro liberation movement, Communists emphasize the recognition of the Negro as a nation. If we have placed principal emphasis upon this right it is not because self-determination has become an immediate problem in the sense that it appears upon the social arena for decision to-day or to-morrow. Self-determination is discussed in detail because it is of the highest importance to chart the direc-

tion in which the movement for equal rights must develop if Negro liberation is to be obtained. Negro liberation consists in winning equal rights in all phases of life. In the South, as is explained in more detail in the book, the right of self-determination is the culmination of the bourgeois-democratic transformation of the South and the highest political expression of the movement for equal rights. The realization of the right of self-determination assures equality for the Negro in all parts of the country only when the predatory and oppressive system of capitalism is done away with.

Every present effort to win equal rights is a step in building and extending the movement for Negro liberation, especially when such efforts result in setting larger masses of both white and Negro into united motion. The fight against discrimination of all kinds, against jim-crow practices, against lynching, the struggle for the vote, for the right to sit on juries and other civil rights, provide the stuff out of which the Negro liberation movement is created. In this respect, one of the most pressing needs of the moment is to build a powerful Negro people's front on a national scale. The program worked out at the National Negro Congress can serve as a focal point around which the existing Negro organizations and progressive labor and middle class groups, although subscribing to divergent political views and differing on method and ultimate program, can unite the Negro people as a unit. The Congress already shows excellent beginnings in the welding of such a united-front. A central Negro people's front can exert tremendous power. Other groups and forces will gravitate towards it as towards a magnet.

The struggle for equal rights cannot, of course, be isolated from other pressing problems of an economic and political character. The most pressing immediate needs of both white and Negro masses now center around problems of unemployment, the needs of the farmers and of labor and the trade unions. These questions, as well as those connected with obtaining equal rights for Negroes, cannot be solved in isolation, but only on the basis of an integral unity between white and Negro labor. In its resolutions on discriminatory practices in the trade unions, the National Negro Congress correctly pledged its support to the fight for industrial unionism in the American Federation of Labor, for it recognized in this a progressive movement in the

ranks of organized labor and an opportunity for the organization of the unorganized Negro workers in the mass production industries.

The labor movement in the North especially offers the best grounds for achieving solidarity between white and Negro labor and forming an alliance between the working class and the Negro people. It is in this connection that the struggle against discriminatory practices in the trade unions takes on special significance. One of the principal tasks facing the labor movement to-day is to throw its doors open to the mass of Negro workers, who have not become trade unionists in large numbers precisely because of discrimination against them in the unions and the absence of any major organizational campaign among them.

The building of such solidarity in the North can exert a telling pressure upon the South, as shown in the Scottsboro defense mass movement, as well as upon the colonial world as demonstrated in the mass support for Ethiopia.

The growth of reaction and the danger of fascism in the United States make it daily more imperative to create an effective barrier to their advance. The Negro people are threatened more than any other section of the population.

The threat of fascism calls for the creation of a popular front, embracing all oppressed and under-privileged sections of the population, dedicated to the struggle for the most pressing needs of the masses. The struggle for these needs, including equal rights for Negroes, can find most effective expression through a Farmer-Labor Party, based upon the trade unions. This significant political development offers the best channel for uniting the Negro people with the forces of labor and progressive groups.

It is along these lines that the masses can be set into motion. Issues change as the situation changes, but as they are met from day to day, we are confident, those forces will mature which will attain the ends set forth at the conclusion of this book. One cannot begin to appreciate the tremendous power for progressive social changes resident in the movement for Negro liberation unless he understands the revolutionary transformation that this movement involves. This, the author hopes, he has succeeded in uncovering.

INTRODUCTION

Wherever, necessary, first-hand sources have been used, principally the census data of the Federal government in the sections on population, the plantation and tenancy, and a number of newspapers and periodicals in the historical discussion. Where it was mainly a question of correlating data already competently treated elsewhere, authoritative books have been drawn upon. The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Helen Marcy, without whose aid in the laborious task of collecting the principal data this book could not have been written. He also wishes to thank the Labor Research Association members for their suggestions and help.

JAMES S. ALLEN.

March, 1936.

THE BLACK BELT: AREA OF NEGRO MAJORITY

THE existence in the South of a continuous and well-defined area where the Negroes have formed the majority of the population practically from the time of the first settlement of this territory is fundamental to both an analysis and a solution of the Negro question in the United States. In a study of the factors which led to the formation of this area and particularly of the factors which prolonged its existence after the abolition of chattel slavery, is to be found the basic data defining the present situation of the American Negroes.

The area in the South in which the Negro population is concentrated has come to be designated in a general way as the Black Belt.* A connection between cotton culture, plantation economy and areas of Negro majority has been noted in economic and social literature. In various historical surveys the old slave economy is compared with the present-day cotton plantation. It has long been a commonplace in northern liberal literature, even to be found to-day in the writings of the southern liberals of the "new school," that there exists in the South a species of bondage not far removed from chattel slavery.¹ Economically, socially and politically the area variously dubbed as the "cotton belt," the "backward South," the "bible belt," and the "solid South," has been vaguely recognized as unique with respect to the United States.

The basic peculiar characteristic of the Black Belt is its plantation economy. The plantation serves as the foundation for the social and cultural uniqueness of the Old South. As we shall show, the plantation has been the dominant factor

*The term "Black Belt" is also sometimes used in a more specialized technical sense to designate black soil areas such as the Black Prairie in Alabama and north-west Mississippi and the Black Waxy Prairie of Texas.

determining the concentration of the Negro population, and the latter is, in turn, a reflection of the stubbornness with which the plantation economy has persisted in a country of the highest developed capitalism. The persistence of a well-defined area of Negro majority in a territory where outmoded, antiquated and semi-feudal forms of agriculture prevail in itself indicates the extreme exploitation and oppression of the Negro masses.

According to the 1930 Census of Population there are 189 counties in the South in which Negroes constitute half or more than half of the population. Grouped around the counties of clear Negro majority are 288 counties in which the Negroes form between 30% and 50% of the population of each county taken singly. In this more or less continuous expanse of territory, comprising 477 counties, there are 13,744,424 inhabitants, of which 6,163,328 are Negroes, constituting 44.8% of the total population. The areas most densely populated by Negroes are in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina, South Carolina, central Georgia and Alabama, and in the lower Mississippi Valley.

Area of Continuous Negro Majority

In order to reveal clearly the factors which determine the concentration of Negro population in the South, it is first necessary to define with greater exactitude than is done in the census the actual present extent of the area of Negro majority. It is clear that somewhere within the area already indicated above there does exist an area of *continuous* Negro majority. The census figures are necessarily based upon percentages of population within each county taken singly. But populations do not stop short at county or state lines, which serve only to demark certain political and administrative units. Because a county line, cutting through a specific area, happens to separate on one side of the line an area in which, say, 60% of the inhabitants are Negroes, and on the other side an area in which only 35% are Negroes, is no reason to drop the 35% area from the whole territory of Negro majority. By retabulating, according to location of the county, the census data on population in the South it is possible to establish accurately and definitely a continuous area in which the Negroes constitute the majority of the population.

The advantages of this method are at once apparent. In the first place, it imparts to the concept of the Black Belt an exactness which has hitherto been lacking and which is necessary for scientific analysis. Secondly, by establishing the actual extent of a continuous area of Negro majority it becomes possible to study those specific economic and social factors which have shaped this area, and to make some illuminating historical comparisons. Thirdly, it throws light upon the practical solution of the Negro question as encompassed in the realization of the right of self-determination for the Negro people.

The area of continuous Negro majority is shown in the map on page 17. The solid portion of the map shows the continuous territory in which the Negroes are just slightly more than half (50.3%) of the total population. In determining this area the counties of clear Negro majority have been used as a basis for a broader and continuous area, within which are to be found isolated counties or groups of counties which do not have Negro majorities. There are 9,525,865 inhabitants in this territory, of whom 4,790,049 are Negroes.

Needless to say, neither the composition of the population nor economic and social conditions alter suddenly at the borders of this territory. There is a gradual decrease in the density of the Negro population as well as a gradual change in economy along its periphery. A study of the periphery of the territory of Negro majority should throw additional light upon the latter and we have indicated the limits of this borderland on the map. In the periphery there is a population of 8,176,921, of which 2,358,302 are Negroes, constituting 28.8% of the inhabitants. The area of continuous Negro majority we shall call Black Belt, its periphery will be termed Border Territory.

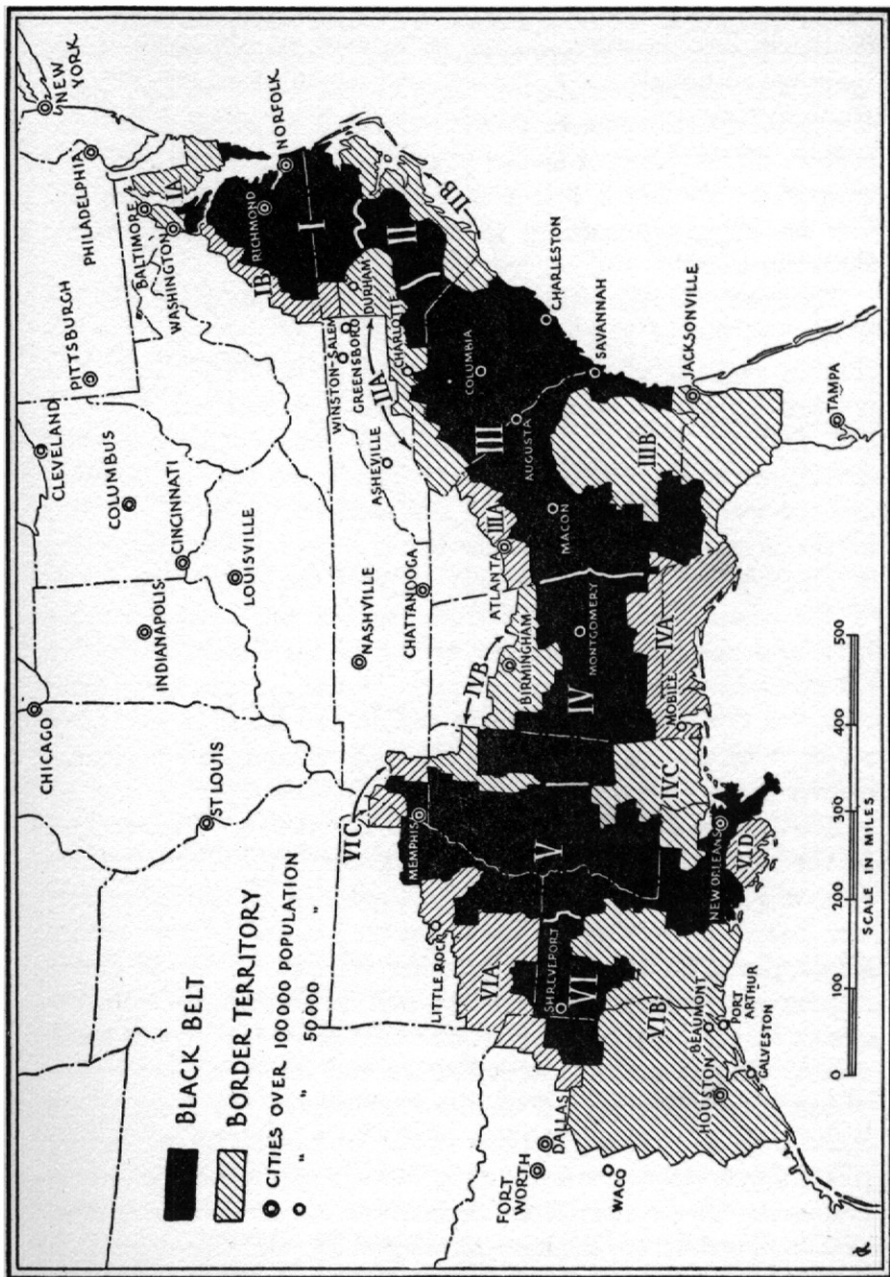
It is not our intention to imply that immutable and unalterable geographic limits exist, corresponding to the areas designated as Black Belt and Border Territory. To a certain degree, the limits established for these areas are arbitrary and have not been defined on the basis of population statistics alone. Population data, however, served as the principal basis for determining the extent of the Black Belt, although other factors also had to be considered, of which the most important is the extent of the plantation economy. Certain areas which, taken singly, have not a clear Negro majority to-day have been included in

the Black Belt because of the persistence of the plantation economy, although in a deteriorated state, and because of certain historical factors which still play a role to-day. The most notable instances are the Virginia and North Carolina sectors included in the Black Belt. In the case of the Border Territory a fringe was simply set off depending in extent principally upon the percentage of Negroes. In some cases this area has been enlarged because of the specific problem raised by peculiarity of location or economy. The Border Territory affords an especially valuable basis for comparison with conditions in the Black Belt, particularly in analysing the special characteristics of capitalist development in the South.

POPULATION OF BLACK BELT AND BORDER TERRITORY
BY REGION, 1930

(Based on U. S. Census of Population by Counties)

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>% Negro of Total</i>
Black Belt			
I	1,529,449	668,665	43.7
II	441,340	189,698	43.0
III	2,789,865	1,440,246	51.6
IV	1,190,293	658,927	55.4
V	2,976,980	1,544,745	51.9
VI	597,938	287,968	48.1
Total, Black Belt	9,525,865	4,790,049	50.3
Border Territory			
IA	283,093	76,789	27.1
IB	253,134	83,037	32.8
IIA	1,192,966	307,287	25.8
IIB	231,354	72,811	31.5
IIIA	719,323	203,978	28.4
IIIB	818,694	278,358	34.0
IVA	546,350	145,261	26.6
IVB	912,385	280,162	30.7
IVC	412,273	117,900	28.6
VIA	718,299	221,082	30.8
VIB	1,820,836	487,583	26.8
VIC	165,947	62,492	37.6
VID	102,267	21,562	21.1
Total, Border Territory	8,176,921	2,358,302	28.8



BLACK BELT AND BORDER TERRITORY

The Black Belt and the Border Territory have not been subject uniformly to the economy of chattel slavery, to the post-Civil War transformation of the plantation and to the forces of capitalist development. This is necessarily reflected in the proportion of the Negroes in the population. In order to facilitate comparison the Black Belt and its periphery have been divided into sub-regions according to certain historical and economic characteristics.*

The South Carolina-Georgia, the Alabama-Mississippi and the Mississippi Valley Black Belt regions (III, IV and V) together contain 77% of all the Negroes living in the Black Belt. The present-day plantations are situated in these areas. It was here also that the chattel slave plantations attained their highest development. The northernmost (Virginia and North Carolina) and the western (eastern Texas and western Louisiana) regions of the Black Belt, on the other hand, have a lower proportion of Negroes and account for only 23% of the Negro population of the whole Black Belt. Of these regions, the former was the first, and the latter, the latest sector of the South to develop the plantation under chattel slavery. In the former, the plantation was the first to deteriorate and in the latter it never had an opportunity to become as strongly entrenched as in the older areas.

The largest Negro populations in the Border Territory are in the rice and cotton area adjoining the Black Belt in southeastern Texas and southwestern Louisiana, in the Arkansas cotton country, in the Alabama heavy industrial area around Birmingham, in the cotton growing sections of the Piedmont Plateau not included in the Black Belt in Georgia and the Carolinas, in the tobacco, turpentine and timber sections of south central Georgia and northern Florida, and in the timber regions of southern Mississippi. With the exception of the Birmingham area, large Negro populations occur in plantation or former plantation areas, or, as in Georgia, Florida and Mississippi, where industries closely related to agriculture have taken over some of the forms of exploitation developed by the plantation.

Three quarters of a century after the abolition of chattel slavery the area of the old slave as well as the modern peon

* The counties included in the Black Belt and Border Territory are listed in Appendix I.

plantations still retains the largest concentration of the Negro population. Furthermore, as shown in the following table, over 40% of the total Negro population of the United States still constitute the majority of the population in the central plantation area, and close to 20% of the total number of Negroes in the country live on the fringes of this area of Negro majority. Only 26% of the Negro people live in an area totally free from the direct influence of the plantation system.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE NEGRO POPULATION, 1930

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Negro Population in United States</i>
Black Belt.	4,790,049	40.3
Border Territory	2,358,302	19.8
South,* other than above.	1,627,493	13.8
Non-South.	3,115,299	26.1
Total	<u>11,891,143</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Historical Continuity of the Black Belt

The Black Belt is not a recent phenomenon. It has been maintained over a long period and its history is intimately linked with the rise of the slave plantation. A portion of the Black Belt had already taken form in the South Atlantic seaboard regions during the colonial period. Its creator and its jailor was the plantation.

Chattel slavery was the only means of assuring a labor supply on the plantations. Early colonists could take with them a working force of indentured servants, but they could not transport the capitalist relations of production with which to force workers to remain wage slaves or starve. There were no peasants to be expropriated from the land and transformed into an army of wage workers; instead there was a tremendous extent of free public property which could be transformed into private property and individual means of production by these very indentured servants. These forced laborers soon turned settlers

* Unless otherwise stated, the term "South" is used to denote only those states, portions of which lie in the Black Belt: Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas. The census designation "South" includes, in addition to the above, Delaware, West Virginia, Kentucky and Oklahoma.

on their own account and together with the free colonists were creating in the North the basis for the development of the capitalist relations of production. But the plantation system which had been established along feudal European lines in the Virginia colony, and which served as a model for the later plantations in the South, could not flourish as long as its labor supply remained uncertain. The slave trade, which in time assured the major portion of the wealth accumulated by the northern merchant capitalists, found at hand in the insipid southern plantation, the form of exploitation best adapted to slave labor.

The products grown on the early plantations in Virginia, Maryland and along the southern Atlantic coast—tobacco, indigo and rice—and the topography of the Coastal Plain, lent themselves to large-scale cultivation by gangs of laborers under close supervision. Transported from a decimated homeland, the African Negro found himself thrust immediately into a discipline of the most primitive and direct form of forced labor, in a social environment which was entirely strange to him. His ties with his own social base had been completely and irrevocably sundered. Out of the background of his fellow slaves he could not even piece together common bonds which could serve as the starting point for creating the solidarity of a uniform social class. His fellow slaves came from diverse peoples of Africa, in varying stages of social development, and spoke different languages. It was only within the completely new conditions of the slave economy, with the past practically a total vacuum, that the slaves could develop mutual bonds and a common language, and create a new social consciousness. Clearly designated from the rest of the population by marked physical characteristics, the Negro slave could not, like the indentured servant, find refuge in the expanse of unsettled land, although some of them did make common cause with Indian tribes.

The concentration of large numbers of slaves on the plantations was an unavoidable weakness of the slave regime. Living in daily contact with each other, subject to uniform conditions of exploitation and of life, the slaves soon developed that class solidarity which, in the form of numerous slave revolts, presented a constant danger to the Bourbon power.

Even in the early period, when the plantation system was taking form and before cotton became the stimulus for its rapid expansion, the Negroes were a significant part of the population in the southern colonies. From some early census enumerations supervised by the British Board of Trade, from estimates of colonial officers and references in contemporary diaries and letters, it is possible to piece together a record of southern population before the first federal census of 1790.² From this data it would seem that South Carolina had a Negro majority as early as 1699, when, it was estimated, there were four Negroes to each white man; at any rate it seems to be fairly established that between 1715 and the Revolutionary War, when a large number of slaves were deported by the British, the Negroes were in the majority in the colony, although the 1790 census reported that the proportion of Negroes was only 44%. A census of Virginia in 1755 reported 103,407 "tithables," of whom 60,078 were Negroes. In 1790 the Negroes were 34.7% of the total population of Maryland, 26.8% in North Carolina, 41% in Virginia. Georgia, a late comer among the colonies, in 1790 already counted 35.9% of its total population Negro.

The Negro slaves were concentrated, however, in those areas where a staple crop made possible cultivation of large fields under the plantation system. Thus, before it was discovered that rice could be grown along the South Carolina coast, the settlers were getting on as best as they could in small-scale and individual farming units. But in 1694 rice was introduced from Madagascar, and when its cultivation proved successful, a large number of slaves were imported. By 1708, an official count of the population along the seaboard of what is now South Carolina revealed 3,500 whites (of whom 120 were indentured servants), 4,100 Negro slaves and 1,400 Indians held in captivity. The slave population increased with the growth of rice production:

. . . In 1724 the whites were estimated at 14,000, the slaves at 32,000 and the rice export was about 4,000 tons; in 1749 the whites were said to be nearly 25,000, the slaves at least 39,000 and the rice export some 14,000 tons, valued at nearly 100,000 pounds sterling; and in 1765 the whites were about 40,000, the slaves about 90,000, and the rice export about 32,000 tons, worth some 225,000 pounds.³

A similar development took place on the tobacco plantations of Virginia, which in 1619 received the first group of slaves to be landed on the North American mainland. By the end of the century the Negroes formed the bulk of the plantation gangs.⁴

13 The manor system was already well established in Maryland by the latter part of the 17th century, but the planters could not afford to buy many slaves because of the poor quality of the tobacco, and there were more indentured servants on the plantations than Negroes. In the tobacco-producing colony of North Carolina the first comers arrived in 1660, but these and those who followed continued as small farmers. Only above Albemarle Sound, in the northeastern section of the State, did the plantation system attain full development, and to this day the Negroes still outnumber the whites in this region. Towards the south, however, the land was too barren and the system of agriculture developed on the basis of small proprietorship. Negroes never formed a large part of the population. North Carolina, with the exception of the northeast where the early plantations were located, does not to-day have an agrarian economy fully typical of the Black Belt and has a correspondingly lower proportion of Negroes.

The forms of exploitation developed even during the early colonial period left an indelible mark on the future history of the South. Wherever the plantation system was deeply rooted, no matter how much it deteriorated later, it left powerful remnants which persist to the present time. A state census of certain Virginia counties was taken in 1782-83. In eight of these counties the average slave-holding ranged from 8.5 to 13 slaves, 15 planters had more than 100 slaves, and 45 planters between 50 and 100 slaves.⁵ Although the plantation has deteriorated in these regions the same eight counties are to-day situated in the Virginia section of the Black Belt.* The three chief plantation counties of Maryland (Ann Arundel, Charles and Prince George), according to the 1790 census, had about the same scale of slave-holding as the eight Virginia counties. Yet, despite the close proximity of these counties to areas of high industrial

* The counties and the proportion of Negroes in their total populations in 1930 are: Amelia, 51%; Hanover, 37%; Lancaster, 45%; Middlesex, 46%; New Kent, 59%; Richmond, 39%; Surry, 60%; and Warwick, 37%.

development, which exert a powerful attraction upon their populations, they still have a high proportion of Negroes.

The South Carolina colony offers an even more striking comparison. By 1790, indigo which had gradually replaced rice, was in turn giving way to cotton in the area around Charleston. The change in product did not necessitate a change in the system of exploitation. According to the federal census of that year, among the 1,643 heads of families in the Charleston District there were 1,318 slaveholders owning 42,949 slaves. The rest of the South Carolina coast, comprising the Georgetown district to the north of Charleston and Beaufort to the south, had a similar scale of slave-holdings.⁶ To-day in the counties of Georgetown, Charleston and Beaufort the percentages of Negroes in the population are 64.4, 54.2 and 71.4 respectively.

Even before the cotton gin was invented (1793), the plantation system was already well developed in Virginia, Maryland, northern North Carolina and along the South Carolina coast into Georgia. In the plantation regions of these colonies, the Negroes already constituted the majority of the population. Within a decade after its invention, the cotton gin was in widespread use and driving cotton cultivation westward at a tremendous pace. When the slave trade was formally closed by an Act of Congress in 1808, there were already 1,000,000 Negro slaves in the country. Their numbers multiplied by forced breeding on the old plantations and supplemented by additional slaves smuggled into the country, they supplied the labor for the new plantations. By 1809 cotton was already a staple in the settlement around Vicksburg in the Mississippi territory; but prior to the War of 1812 the cotton plantation developed principally into the Carolina-Georgia Piedmont and tended southwestward into Alabama.⁷ This section, the oldest large-scale cotton growing region in the South, forms the Carolina-Georgia region of the Black Belt to-day.

In the meantime, sugar plantations were being founded in the delta lands of southeastern Louisiana. The labor supply from the Atlantic Coast was supplemented by slaves brought over from San Domingo by landowners fleeing the slave revolution. By 1830 there were 691 sugar plantations with 36,000 working slaves in this area and by 1850 the number of slaves

in the sugar parishes had doubled.⁸ This region is to be found within the present Black Belt.

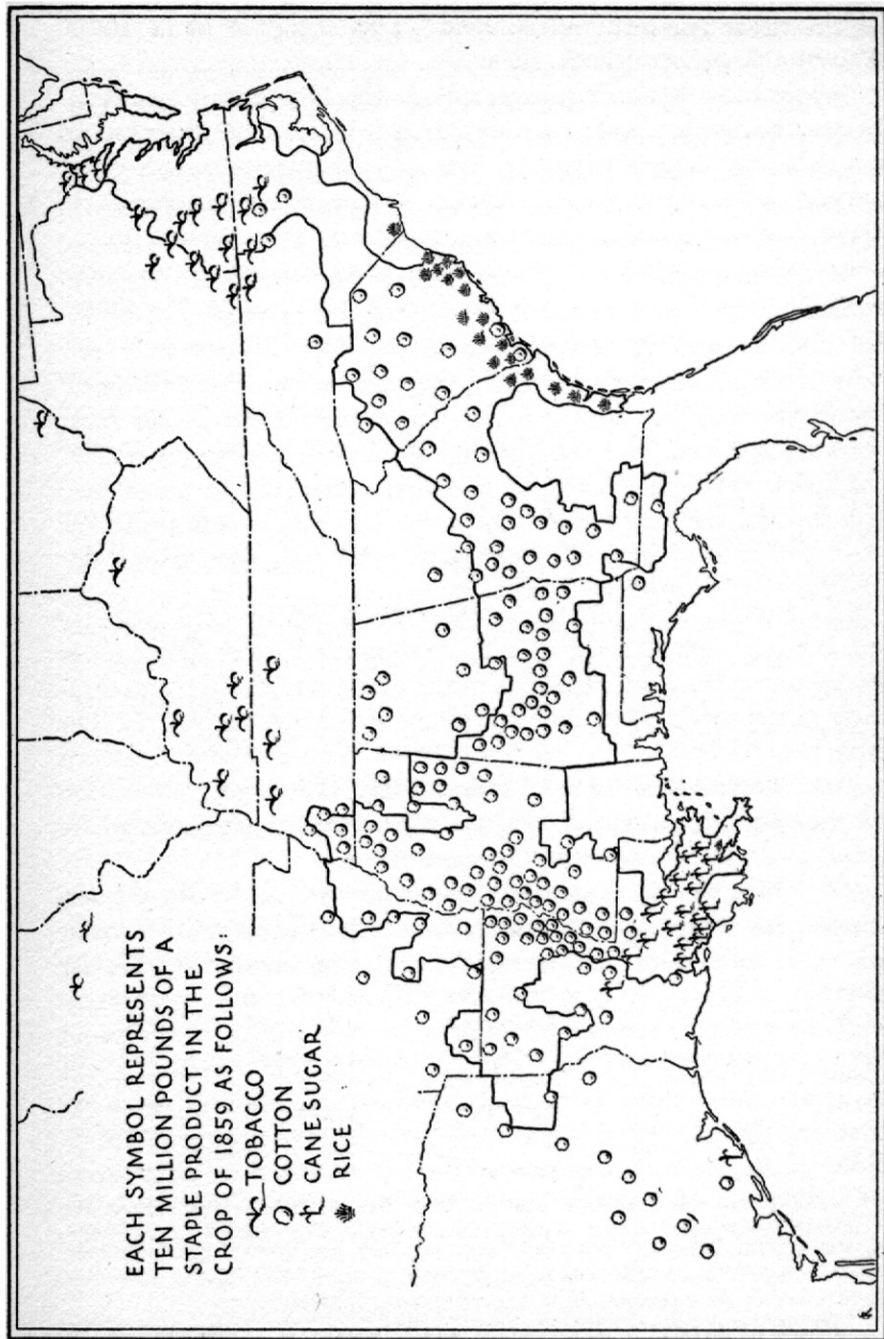
While the westward movements in the North and into Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri carried with them the seed of capitalist development in the form of self-sufficing free pioneer farming, the westward movement in the South extended the slave regime. When the capture of Mobile from Spain during the War of 1812 and the defeat of the Indians assured an outlet for the products of the interior cotton plantations, the movement into Alabama and Mississippi developed rapidly. Between 1810 and 1860 the population of Alabama and Mississippi grew from 200,000 to 1,660,000 and the proportion of slaves from 40% to 47%. During the same period the slave regime expanded through Louisiana and into Arkansas and Texas. Its barren soil saved Florida from the plantation, and with the exception of a small region in the northwestern part of the state, it remains outside the Black Belt to-day.

The black soil prairies across central Alabama, which is to-day an area of great density of Negro population, was first opened to cotton culture in 1814 and within 20 years the slave plantation system was extending throughout its whole length. The Mississippi River valley, reaching from Tennessee and Arkansas to the mouth of the Red River, to-day the largest plantation area in the Black Belt, had already been rather well settled by 1840.

By 1860, on the eve of the revolution which would destroy it, the slave regime had reached its zenith. The capitalist power of the North had already become strong enough to hinder further expansion westward. The limits of the slave plantation area in 1860 also mark the limits of the area of continuous Negro majority. The 1930 Black Belt remains essentially the same area on which the mass of Negroes were enslaved by King Cotton, waving the scepter of chattel slavery. Impose the outlines of the area of continuous Negro majority in 1930 upon an economic map of the South of 1860, and see that they are almost identical with the plantation area of over 75 years ago!

Is the Black Belt Disappearing?

As long as chattel slavery ruled the South, an open and direct form of forced labor bound the Negro masses to the plantation.



AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE SOUTH, 1859
The outline of the 1930 Black Belt is shown (See p. 24.)

A measure of the effectiveness with which the Civil War broke these bonds should be found in the degree to which the area of continuous Negro concentration was dissipated and the Negro population more evenly distributed over the United States in the period which followed. Bourgeois freedom would have released the slave to become either a landowner himself or a wage-worker free to sell his labor power to a capitalist farmer or to the manufacturers of the North who were so urgently in need of it that they went to all lengths to obtain labor in Europe.* In reality, however, the Black Belt did not only remain intact, but in that continuous area in which the Negro was in the majority in 1930, the Negro population had almost doubled by 1910. This was due neither to a breaking up of the plantation system into individual farms owned by Negroes nor to industrial development in this area. The plantation, utilizing other forms of labor, has succeeded over this long period in holding the Negro population.

But the plantation economy had to contend with antagonistic forces. Comparing the population of the 1930 area of Negro majority with the population of the same territory for each decade since 1860, we obtain the following results:

POPULATION OF THE BLACK BELT, 1860-1930**
(Based Upon the Federal census of Population, by Counties,
for the Respective Years†)

<i>Census Year</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Negro Population</i>	<i>% Negro of Total</i>
1930	9,525,865	4,790,049	50.3
1920	8,968,132	4,806,565	53.6
1910	8,387,958	4,842,766	57.7
1900	7,498,900	4,488,991	59.9
1890	6,465,307	3,866,792	59.8
1880	5,750,410	3,466,924	60.3
1870	4,431,597	2,560,263	57.8
1860	4,362,009	2,461,099	56.4

* In 1864 Congress enacted a contract labor law authorizing the importation of laborers under terms similar to the bonded servitude of colonial days. Although the law was soon repealed, the practice was continued, especially the importation of Orientals under forced labor contracts. (Charles E. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, II, pp. 244-245.)

** For population by Regions see Appendix II, Table 1.

† The Census Bureau admits that there have been undercounts in the Negro population in several Censuses taken since 1860. For 1870 it places the undercount at 500,000 and declares that the deficiencies of that Census "were so considerable and

This comparison shows that in the continuous area in which Negroes were half of the total population in 1930 they had previously constituted a larger proportion of the population. If instead, the area of bare Negro majority were calculated for each decade separately, it could be shown that a larger area of Negro majority existed with little change until 1910. Between 1910 and 1930 it is evident that forces were operating which tended to dissipate the concentration of Negro population. While the Negro population of the Black Belt had increased by 96% between 1860 and 1910, the white population had increased only 86% during the same period. But between 1910 and 1930 the white population increased by 33% while the Negro population *decreased* by slightly over one per cent. Furthermore, factors were operating which left the rate of increase of the white population practically uniform in the Black Belt while exerting their main influence upon the Negroes. This is shown in the comparison of the rates of increase for the white and Negro population by decades.* The increase recorded for the white population fluctuated between 13% and 17%. It is difficult to generalize on the rate of increase of the Negro population because of the undercounts in the various census enumerations, although a downward tendency probably began in 1900-1910. In the next two decades the Negro population decreased at the rate of 0.8% and 0.3% respectively, representing an absolute loss in population of 52,717 in the entire Black Belt.** The reduced proportion of the Negroes in the population of the Black Belt was, therefore, the sum total of an in-

with respect to different localities [of the South] so indeterminable as practically to destroy the significance of the data." The undercount in the 1890 Census is placed at 270,000 by the Bureau. (Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population, 1790-1915*, pp. 25-28.) An undercount is also admitted for 1920 (*Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population*, Volume II, pp. 25-26). Since most of the undercounts occurred precisely in the Black Belt, comparative figures based on the uncorrected census enumerations, do not give an entirely correct picture, and explain in part certain variations in the rate of growth of the Negro population in this region. Since it is impossible to allocate these undercounts by regions, and since the 1940 Census may also cast doubt upon the accuracy of the 1930 enumeration, we have made no effort to correct our population figures according to the estimated undercount. A few per cent one way or another cannot alter the main conclusions of the study.

* See Appendix II, Table 3.

** In addition to the absolute loss in Negro population, the Black Belt also lost the natural increase for this period. In Chapter VI it is shown that about 1,000,000 Negroes migrated out of the Black Belt in the period 1910-30.

creasing white population and a decrease in the number of Negro inhabitants after 1910.

While a decrease in the proportion of Negroes in the total population of the Border Territory took place during the same period, the Negro population continued to grow, although the rate of increase did tend downward after 1910.* It is evident, however, as shown in the following table, that the Negro population of the Border Territory as a whole, showed no marked tendency downward, although there are regional variations depending upon local economic factors. But in general, the factors tending towards the disintegration of dense Negro population were operative to any important extent in the Black Belt only.

POPULATION OF THE BORDER TERRITORY, 1860-1930**

<i>Census Year</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Negro Population</i>	<i>% Negro of Total</i>
1930	8,176,921	2,385,302	28.8
1920	6,937,042	2,192,457	31.6
1910	6,000,607	2,032,773	33.9
1900	4,775,570	1,708,411	35.8
1890	3,702,524	1,383,471	37.4
1880	2,935,387	1,120,844	38.0
1870	2,107,689	802,617	38.1
1860	1,899,060	705,095	37.1

During the period between the census enumerations of 1910 and 1930 there occurred the mass migration of Negroes into the North and the most intensive industrialization yet experienced by the South. In many quarters these events were hailed as nothing more or less than the beginning of a rapid dissolution of the Black Belt, of a process of final disintegration of its plantation economy, and of the more even distribution of the Negro population in the country as a whole.

In reality, the "epoch-making" events of 1910-1930 accomplished none of these things. Without at this point examining the results produced in the Black Belt economy, but limiting ourselves to the population movements, we note the following changes.

* See Appendix II, Table 4.

** For population by Regions see Appendix II, Table 2.

The whole area did not respond uniformly.* Because of internal developments and its northern location, the Virginia region (I) of the Black Belt was more subject to the influences of industrialization. Despite the presence within the region of fairly large cities and ports, which tend to maintain population, the effect of greater industrialization in adjacent areas was felt from an early date in a tendency to dissipate the Negro majority. The Negro population of this region had a low and static rate of increase since 1880, and prior to that date large numbers of Negro toilers had migrated into the newer plantation areas of the Mississippi Valley. In 1880 the region still counted 56.3% of its population Negro, but by 1910 less than half of its inhabitants (49.2%) were Negroes and in 1930 the proportion had been reduced to 43.7%. Yet, the rate at which the Negro concentration was reduced is surprisingly low, in view of the proximity of this area to large industrial centers and to such large cities as Baltimore and Washington.

In the North Carolina region of the Black Belt there has been practically no change in the proportion of Negroes since 1860, and a stable and high rate of increase was maintained throughout the period. Finally, in the Texas-Louisiana region (VI), the latest plantation area fully developed under the slave regime, there was a rapid rise in the rate of increase in the Negro population in the decade 1920-1930 (17.6 as compared with 3.3 for the previous decade and 6.3 for 1900-1910).

It is precisely in the most extensive area of the plantation economy, in the South Carolina-Georgia, Alabama-Mississippi and Mississippi Valley Black Belt regions (III, IV and V), which in 1930 contained 77% of the total Negro population of the Black Belt, that the most extensive changes in Negro population occurred. But how extensive were these results? Was there a decisive change in the distribution of the Negro population even here?

Already during the decade 1900-1910 a decline in the rate of increase of the Negro population of the three regions was apparent. The proportion of Negroes in these regions combined declined from 62% in 1900 to 60% in 1910. From 1910 to 1930 the Negro population had decreased by 4.8%, while the

* The data used in the following discussion will be found in Appendix II, Table 1.

white population increased 31%. Despite the decrease in the absolute Negro population, and the further increase in the white population, the proportion of Negroes was reduced in this area as a whole only to 52% in 1930. In face of the economic forces which for the time tended to drain the Black Belt of its Negro population, these plantation regions retained a decided Negro majority.

It is important to note, however, that during this 20-year period an absolute decrease in the Negro population occurred only in the older plantation regions comprised in the South Carolina-Georgia and Alabama Black Belts (regions III and IV). The Negro population in these regions decreased 10%. In the Mississippi Valley (region V), on the other hand, the center of the large-scale and highly organized plantations, the Negro population had *increased* about 4%. The oldest of the three plantation regions, South Carolina-Georgia, was able to retain its Negro population and even increase it during 1910-20, but in the following decade, when it suffered most from the agricultural crisis, it lost 11.2% of its Negro population. The reverse process occurred in Alabama-Mississippi and the Valley. During 1910-20 the former lost 11.7% of its Negro population, the latter 2.4%. But during the next ten years the trend was reversed in both these regions, the Negro populations having *increased* by 1.3% and 6.6%, respectively.

It is apparent that the factors which tended to deplete the Negro population of the Black Belt were effective only temporarily, and were already beginning to lose their effect in the decade 1920-30 in the principal plantation area. Of course, the developments of the last 25 years produced other effects upon the Black Belt economy, not shown by the population figures. But those who thought that the migration was only the beginning of a rapid disintegration of the area of Negro majority are refuted by the above figures. This is far from being merely an academic problem. For if this were the actual tendency it would amount to nothing more or less than that capitalism could still solve within its own confines and in a gradual manner, without the discomforts of an agrarian mass upheaval on the plantations, those very problems which the Civil War of 1861-65 had left unsettled. For the persistence of the area of Negro

majority means the persistence of the plantation economy, of which it is a result. The area of continuous Negro majority has only been slightly altered, indicating that those factors which have in the past confined a large portion of the Negro people to the territorial limits set by the slave regime still persist.

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THE ECONOMIC SURVIVALS OF SLAVERY

THE plantation system is a distinctive and peculiar feature of southern economy. In agriculture, it has determined the forms of labor and methods of farm organization in non-plantation sectors as well. It has had a profound influence on the development of industry in the South. The plantation has shaped the area of Negro majority, maintained it with little change over a period of the intensive penetration of capitalism and industrialization. The persistence of the plantation in a modified form after the overthrow of the chattel slave system was accompanied by the persistence of forms of labor which were but modifications of slavery.

In his work, *Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America*, written in 1913, Lenin made some penetrating and highly important observations on southern agrarian economy. Primarily this work is concerned, as the title indicates, with the extent and nature of capitalist relations in agriculture, and with refuting the theory of the non-capitalist development of agriculture as defended by one of the most prominent economists representing the extreme left bourgeois tendencies of Russian and European social thought. In the section of this work devoted to agriculture in the South, Lenin takes sharp issue with this economist who maintained that the United States is "a country that never knew feudalism and has none of its economic survivals."

"This statement," declares Lenin, "is directly contrary to the facts, for the economic survivals of *slavery* are not distinguishable in any respects from those of feudalism, and in the former slave-owning South of the United States these survivals *are still very powerful*." He points out that the same mistake was made in the entire liberal and populist literature of Russia sys-

tematically and stubbornly with regard to share-cropping in Russia—"our survivals of feudalism." What, asks Lenin, is the economic foundation upon which rests the "fine superstructure of "the most shameful and despicable oppression of the Negroes?"

"It is a foundation typically Russian, the 'real Russian' system of *share tenancy*, viz., *share-cropping*."

After pointing out the high proportion of tenants among Negro farmers, Lenin continues:

But this is only a part of the story. These are not even tenants from the point of view of cultured modern European capitalism. We are dealing here mainly with semi-feudal relationships or, what is the same from the economic point of view, with the semi-slavery system of share-cropping. . . .

The share-cropping region, both in America and Russia, is the most backward region, where the toiling masses are subjected to the greatest degradation and oppression. . . . The American South is to the "liberated" Negroes akin to a prison, hemmed in, backward, without access to fresh air.¹

Lenin has here illuminated the crux of the Negro question and pointed out one of the most important peculiar features of the development of capitalism in the United States. In passing, we might point out that American bourgeois writers have shared in the "mistake" of the writer with whom Lenin takes issue. The absence of feudalism in any of its forms is supposed by these writers to have left capitalism free from any of the heritages of feudalism, permitted a fuller and freer development of democracy without the encumbrances of inherited economic and social antagonisms such as hindered the development of capitalism in European countries. It should suffice to point to the existence of chattel slavery and the persistence of the plantation economy in the South *after* the Civil War to refute those who hold this view. But it is precisely the latter which they cannot or do not want to see. For, as far as the Negroes are concerned, the persistence of the plantation economy and its social derivations have turned Emancipation into an historical memory. The remnants of slavery in all their ramifications explain the basic content of the Negro question in the United States.

The Bourgeois Revolution, 1860-1877

The present-day plantation and share-cropping are proof that the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the United States, as represented specifically by the Civil War, left unfinished its proper historic tasks. The infancy of American capitalism, when as a whole it was still but an adjunct of European capitalism, was characterized by the increasingly sharp struggle between the gathering forces of capitalism in the North and the slave system in the South. Fundamentally, this struggle was of the same character as the bourgeois-democratic revolutions which raged in Europe from the 17th to the 18th centuries, as exemplified by the Civil War of 1642 in England which resulted in the establishment of the Commonwealth, the Great French Revolution and the revolutions of 1848 on the Continent. The French Revolution, beginning in 1789, exhibits, in the most complete form, the historic tasks of a classical bourgeois-democratic revolution of the 19th century. In one night, August 4-5, 1789, the National Assembly severed all the feudal bonds of the enserfed peasantry; with the abolition of provincial barriers and privileges, national unity was established; the Declaration of the Rights of Man proclaimed as sacred those civil rights to-day associated with bourgeois democracy and which receive their highest political expression during the French Revolution in the establishment of the Republic in 1792. Supported by the peasantry, the middle class, formerly oppressed by the feudal nobility, now became the new ruling class. The abolition of feudalism and the establishment of the bourgeois-democratic republic are the principal economic and political tasks of the classic bourgeois-democratic revolution, a revolution called forth by the development of capitalism in the midst of the old, outworn and outmoded feudal relations.

In the United States the slave system held the same relation to capitalist development as did feudalism in its late stages in Europe. The physical separation of the opposing social system, one in the North and the other in the South, does not alter the basic content of the conflict which culminated in the Civil War. In fact, this peculiarity of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the United States permitted the two systems to develop to a high level, each within its own confines, before the

decisive struggle at last broke out. This conflict was inevitable for as long as chattel slavery existed it hindered the further development of capitalism and prevented the rounding out of the continent by prolonging basic sectional divisions.

If national unity was the principal battle cry of the North, it was because capitalism needed assurance of a united home market for its industry. Through its tremendous cotton exports the South offered the principal base for the dominance of foreign, especially English, manufacture in the American market. The struggle of the native industrial capitalists against the European for dominance of the home market was therefore indissolubly bound up with the struggle against the slave system. The support of the English ruling classes for the Confederacy was a reflection of this; they interpreted the war against the South as a war against themselves. In fact, from the point of view of the economic development of American capitalism, one of the greatest benefits achieved by the Civil War was that in the destruction of the chattel slave system it at the same time removed the principal ground upon which British economic dominance was established and created a basis for turning the United States from a colony of Europe into a powerful independent capitalist power.

Thus, the Civil War and the prolongation of the conflict in another form into the Reconstruction period, was a bourgeois revolution. All that was required of it by history and all that lay in its power to accomplish could be carried through without overstepping the bounds of bourgeois democracy. The minimum task of the revolution, the accomplishment of which would guarantee the national dominance of the bourgeoisie, undisputed by the slave power, was the destruction of chattel slavery. By the close of the war chattel slavery had already been abolished, but the revolution had only completed its first cycle. If the "conquered provinces" were to be completely subdued, the former slave-owners had to be deprived of their last vestige of economic and political power and all safeguards taken against a restoration. "Only now, after the phase of the Civil War," Karl Marx commented, "has the United States really entered the revolutionary phase."² If this revolutionary phase were to reach its full fruition, the bourgeois dictatorship established in the South in the form of the Reconstruction governments

which were supported by the Negroes and the middle classes, would have to accomplish a complete transformation in the system of landownership, expropriating the large landowners and dividing their land among the former slaves. It would also have to give this fundamental change in the economic basis of southern society political expression in the form of the enfranchisement of the Negroes and by generally drawing these new peasant proprietors within the orbit of bourgeois democracy.

It does not fall within the scope of this book to analyze the exceedingly rich, revolutionary period of the Civil War and Reconstruction, nor to enter upon a discussion of the varied social transformations which occurred.³ Here we need only remark that the Civil War abolished chattel slavery without destroying the plantation. Instead of suffering the fate of "Confiscation"—the most pertinent battle cry of the Reconstruction period—the plantation survived. This also determined the outcome of the struggle of the Negro people for equal and civil rights. Once the land question was settled in the interest of reaction, there could only be a similar outcome in the sphere of general social reform. The "peculiar institution" of chattel slavery was transformed into the equally "peculiar institution" of southern tenancy; the slave market, symbol of the human chattel, gave way to the lynching post, guardian over the "modernized" plantation.

Extent of the Plantation System

The persistence of powerful remnants of slavery is the foundation, as Lenin has pointed out, of the oppression of the Negro people. It was in the period immediately following the Civil War that the economic slave survivals, as we know them to-day, became firmly embedded, and we should, therefore, examine in brief the form of agrarian economy which rose out of the slave plantation. But first we must inquire into the actual extent of the post-Bellum plantation, upon which developed the forms of labor peculiar to the South.

In the main, the slave plantations remained practically intact as large holdings. Unfortunately, there are no statistics available which treat the plantations as single units, until the special plantation census of 1910, and since then no similar

statistics were taken. The regular dicennial census counts as individual farms the tenant holdings on the plantations, so that in the final figures of the census one single plantation, in the hands of a single large-scale landowner who runs his undertaking as a single unit, appears as five or more farms depending upon the number of tenants on the soil. The tremendous increase in the number of farms in the South and the sharp decrease in the size of the average holding shown in the census figures do not therefore reflect a breaking up of the plantation, but the division of these plantation tracts into tenant holdings.

Thus between 1860 and 1910 the amount of land in farms in 11 southern cotton states increased only 43% while the number of farms returned by the census increased from a little more than a half million to two and a half million. Between 1860 and 1880, the years covering the transformation of the plantation, the number of farms reported had increased from 549,000 to about 1,250,000, or by 128%, while all land in farms had *decreased* almost 2%. While to some extent this did reflect the break up of the plantations into small-scale farming units owned by petty proprietors, these figures reflect principally the establishment of plantation tenancy. In contrast, figures for the North during the same period show that the increase in the number of farms kept pace in a general way with the increase of all land in farms, and the average size of the farm was growing. Thus, the average farm in the North in 1850 contained 65.4 acres of improved land, and 100.3 acres in 1910; while in the South the respective figures were 101.1 acres in 1850 and 48.6 acres in 1910.⁴

The only conclusive and more or less definitive statistics on the extent of the plantation are supplied by the plantation census of 1910. It was taken at a time when industrialization in the South and the pull of non-southern industry as reflected by migration could not yet have exerted any appreciable influence upon the South's agrarian economy. The extent of the plantation system as revealed by the 1910 data would in general be the limits of the plantation area beyond which it is unlikely it extended in the years that followed. This census offers us an opportunity for actually measuring the extent of the economic survivals of slavery, half a century after the demise of the slave system. Although the data was collected in 1910, it

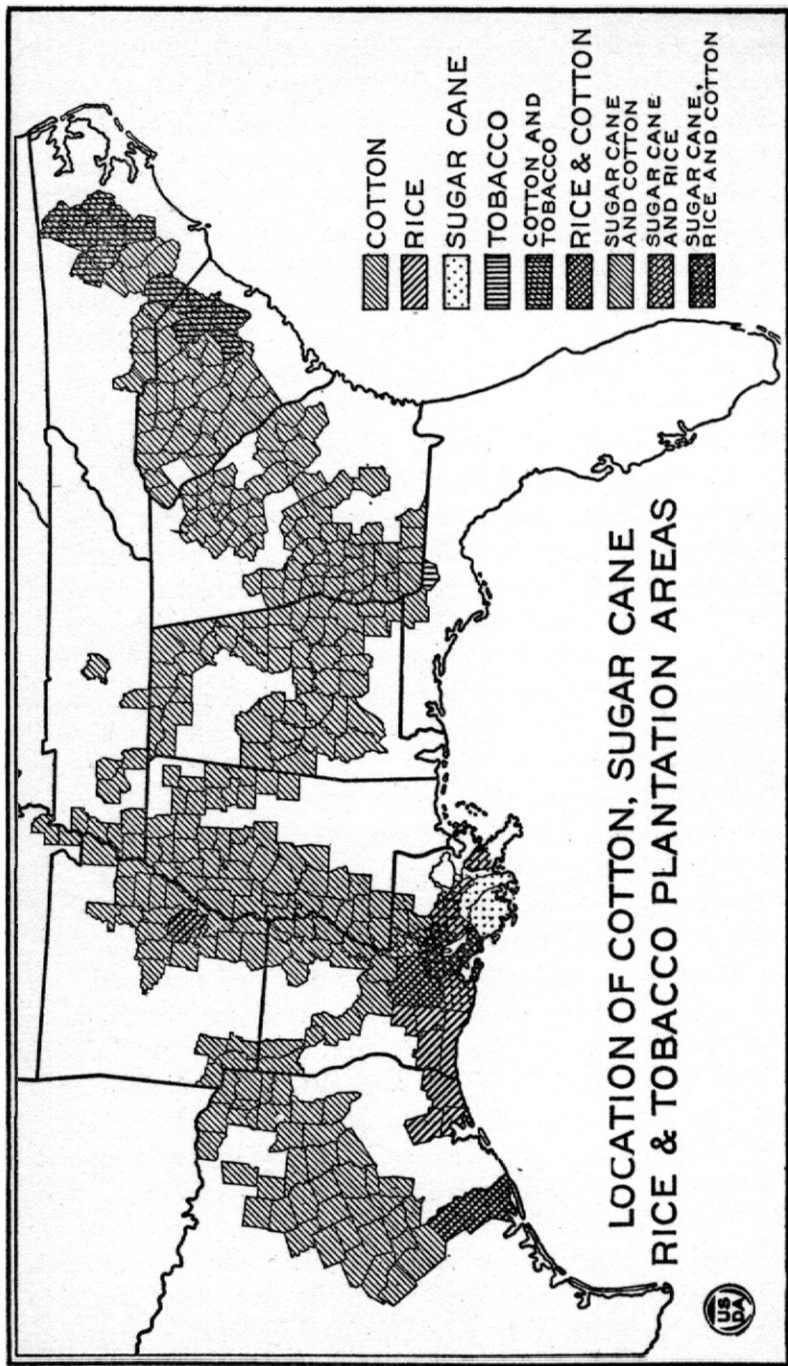
cannot be considered as being antiquated. A supplementary study, published in 1926 and discussed in Chapter IV, which used the 1910 data as a basis, reveals that there had been little change in the extent of the plantation.

The 1910 census, fortunately, separated tenant plantations in the South from the large holdings of plantation size which employed wage-labor exclusively, for the latter are not plantations in the sense in which we use the term and are indicative not of the hangovers of slavery, but rather of the penetration of capitalism into southern agriculture.

The census defined the tenant plantation as "a continuous tract of land of considerable area under the general supervision or control of a single individual or firm, all or a part of such tract being divided into at least five smaller tracts, which are leased to tenants." This definition limits the extent of the survey to the larger scale plantations, for it eliminates the smaller units which have less than five tenant holdings; it also excludes groups of tenant farms which, although in the hands of a single landowner, are not contiguous and are therefore not so thoroughly subject to centralized control as on a large single unit. The definition also involves the idea of strict supervision by the landowner or his agents over the tenants. Unfortunately the data makes no distinction as to the mode of tenancy, but groups croppers, share- and cash-tenants together as tenants.

The estates listed as tenant plantations in this survey are therefore the relatively larger ones on which the tenant system and supervision are more highly organized. On holdings which have less than five tenants—whether they be continuous tracts or those on which the tenant farms are not continuous although in the hands of a single owner—as well as on large holdings in which more than five tenants may work for a single landowner although the land is not one continuous tract, the relations of production which are maintained on the plantations included in the survey also prevail, although on not so highly organized a scale.

The investigation covered 325 counties in 11 states, situated within the cotton belt and particularly that section of the cotton belt in which there is a very large proportion of Negroes. The report states that "In the great majority of the counties for which plantation statistics are presented the Negroes con-



Based on plantation census of 1910, supplemented by data obtained in special field investigations, 1920-21, in the newer developed sections. (From United States Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 1269, "Relation of Land Tenure to Plantation Organization," by C. O. Brannen.)

stitute at least half of the total population," and that "there are comparatively few counties outside of the area for which plantation statistics are presented in which the proportion is as high as 50%."⁵ The map on page 39 shows how closely the plantation area in 1910 approximated the area of continuous Negro majority for 1930. With the exception of a section in north and northwest Alabama, the plantations reported by the 1910 census are situated within the territory we have termed Black Belt and Border Territory, with the plantation area as a whole following pretty closely the contours of the Black Belt. *It is evident that the area of continuous Negro majority is the plantation area.*

In this area in 1910 there were 39,073 tenant plantations of five or more tenant farms, having a total of 398,905 tenants or an average of ten tenants to each plantation. That these are large-scale undertakings is shown by the fact that the average plantation contained 724.2 acres of which 405.3 were improved; the value of its land and buildings was \$17,322. In acreage the average plantation was five times as large, in value of land and buildings three times as great as the average farm in the United States. But the very large-scale plantations constitute a large proportion of these. Of the total number of plantations 68% had from five to nine tenants, 23.4% from 10 to 19 tenants, 7.5% from 20 to 49 tenants, and 412 plantations, or 1.1% of the total, had 50 tenants or more. Thus, while 8.6% of the total number of plantations had 20 or more tenants, they contained 28% of all tenant farms in plantations, 23% of land in plantations, and accounted for 25% of the total value of land and buildings on plantations. In other words, about one-fourth of the plantation economy is concentrated in the hands of only one-twelfth of the owners of plantations. An idea of the high development of large-scale undertakings is given by the fact that the 412 plantations having 50 tenants or more had an average acreage of 3,538 acres as compared with 1,688 acres in plantations having from 20 to 49 tenants.

On the plantations the landowner reserves for his own direct use a large portion of the land which he does not "rent out" but works with wage-labor. On this land he usually grows the food crops for supplies to the tenant families and the feed for live stock. The land retained and operated by the owner

amounted to 45.7% of the total plantation acreage. The average farm thus retained by the landlord was 330.9 acres, as compared with the average tenant holding of 38.5 acres, although only 26.2% of the landlord farm was improved land while 81% of the tenant holding was improved. This large acreage operated by the planter himself in some respects resembles the domain of the lord's mansion in a feudal economy, on which his serfs were forced to contribute labor and where fuel could be chopped from the forest and occasional hunting and fishing permitted.

This landlord farm is also a reserve of land, much of which is unimproved, which may be put into commercial production as the opportunity arises. The labor for working the improved land on this holding is in part supplied by regular wage-labor and in part by tenants or members of their families on the plantation, under forced labor conditions. On the larger plantations even a greater proportion of the plantation acreage is retained in the landowner-operated farm, the average size of such a holding in the group having 50 tenants or over being 1,375 acres. Thus, the largest plantation units also contain the largest wage-labor farms in the Black Belt, side by side with the highest development in the plantation economy. The biggest plantation lord is therefore also the biggest exploiter of wage-labor, although this wage-labor is intimately connected with the semi-slave conditions of plantation tenancy. This situation reflects the close interrelations existing on the plantation between capitalist and semi-feudal relations of production.

The plantations hold a dominant position in the agrarian economy of the area in which they are situated. The census study included only the more highly developed plantations. But even in these cases, of the total number of farms in the 325 counties covered by the survey, 37.1% were plantation farms (counting tenant holdings as farms), and of the total farm acreage in these counties 31.5% were in plantations. The plantations represented 32.8% of the total value of land and building in these counties. Remembering that the plantation economy, in its direct application and in its effects upon other forms of agrarian organization, is much more extensive than the actual plantations covered in the census study, the figures given above really represent the position held by the more highly or-

ganized and large-scale plantations in the whole agrarian economy of this region.

There is a direct relationship between the degree of concentration of the Negro population and the relative importance of the plantation economy. Thus, one-third of the total number of plantations covered by the census are situated in the Mississippi River valley (very closely approximating region V of the Black Belt) and this area contains 301 of the 412 plantations having over 50 tenants. In 1910 region V of the Black Belt contained slightly over 30% of the total number of Negroes living in the Black Belt as a whole. In the Mississippi Valley 50% of all farms were plantation farms representing about 51% of the total value of land and buildings in this area. In North Carolina, however, in the area approximated by region II of the Black Belt where there is a relatively low proportion of Negroes, only about 19% of the total number of farms were on plantations.⁶ The intensity of the plantation economy determines the degree of concentration and of oppression of the Negro population.

In the Yazoo Delta, the most fertile section of the lower Mississippi Valley, 70% of the improved lands to-day is in cotton, 85% of the farm land is operated in plantations, and 86% of the farms (practically all tenant holdings) are operated by Negro tenants. The largest plantation in the world at Scott, Mississippi, is in the Delta and contains 48,000 acres. "Nowhere," remarks one writer, "are ante-Bellum conditions so nearly preserved as in the Yazoo Delta. . . . The Delta planters compose Mississippi's aristocracy . . . conversely, here the Negro is to be found at his lowest levels in America." The same writer quotes a district manager of the Mississippi Staple Cotton Co-operative Association as follows: "We know of one concern who has a schedule by which he believes he can take care of his live stock for 15 cents a day and his tenants for \$4.50 per month per head. If any planter in the Delta is interested in securing this formula we shall be glad to send it to him upon request."⁷

If the plantation is really considered as a single farm, as it should be, and not as a number of tenant farms, it constitutes only 3.3% of all farms in the plantation area but accounts for about one-third of the total farm acreage and value of land and buildings. *The greatest concentration of land is in the hands of the plantation owners.*

In a study made in 1926 of three Alabama and five Mississippi counties situated in the heart of the Black Belt, it was found that in the former 35% of the landlords and in the latter 40% held three or more tenant farms or between 82% and 90% of all the rented farms in these areas (including tenant holdings on plantations); and in these regions the landlords owning 500 or more acres (about 9% of all landlords) possessed between 52% and 58% of all rented acreage. Landlords holding more than five farms (a group similar to those classed as tenant plantations in the 1910 census study) owned between 73% and 82% of all rented farms. Of the landlords studied in the Alabama counties, 3.7% and of those in the Mississippi counties, 22.6% held rented farms valued at \$25,000 or more, representing 35.3% and 82.3% respectively of the value of all rented farms in these sections. These figures, showing the prime place held by the plantation in the southern tenant system, are considered to be fairly representative of the situation in the Black Belt, although in the eastern regions the concentration of landownership is probably considerably less.⁸

The relative position held by well-developed plantations and other types of farms in the cotton belt in the 325 counties surveyed by the 1910 plantation study is shown in the following table:⁹

	<i>% of all Farmers</i>	<i>% of all Farm Lands</i>	<i>Average Size of Farm (in Acres)</i>
Plantation			
Landlords	3.3	14.4	331
Tenants	33.7	17.1	39
Non-Plantation*			
Farm-owners and managers .	29.4	45.6	118
Tenants	31.7	23.9	57

The group of farm-owners and managers in the "non-plantation" sector include those landowners who work their own farms as well as those who in addition rent to tenants, although the land worked by the latter is listed separately. The group of landlords and of farm-owners and managers, about 33% of the total number of farmers, own all the land and operate or maintain as a reserve 60% of all the land in farms. The 60% of

* Including plantations of less than five tenants and large holdings which are not continuous.

the total farm lands represented as operated by these groups contains a high proportion of unimproved lands and lands in woods and if the proportion were calculated on the basis of cultivated land, it would be found that the tenants operate well over half of the cultivated acreage.

But it is precisely on the plantation that the Negro tenants are to be found. Practically all of the white farm operators are comprised in the groups of non-plantation farm operators. The tenant relations in this sector are not free from the semi-slave relations on the plantations and exhibit many features in common with them. But the center of strength of the survivals of the slave economy is on the plantations, where practically all the tenants are Negroes. This, then, is the most important difference between the white and Negro tenantry in the cotton belt and is an important distinction when we come to consider white and Negro tenancy in the Black Belt.

Rise of Southern Tenancy

The real content of the economic slave survivals is to be found in an examination of southern tenancy, particularly of share-cropping and share-tenancy. Large-scale landownership in itself is not a symptom of feudal survivals; it is to be found in highly developed capitalist farming as well as under feudal or slave regimes. The relations of production, *i.e.*, the relations between the actual tillers of the soil and the landlord, differ in the various systems of social production, and it is in the distinction between tenancy in the North and tenancy in the South that the distinction between capitalist and semi-slave relations of production is to be found.

Tenancy as it exists in the North and in the South are the culmination of altogether two different historical processes and have arisen on different economic bases. In the South, tenancy, with the exception sometimes of cash and standing renting, grew out of chattel slavery; it is the distinctive mark of the incompleteness of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. To prevent the possession of the land by the landless Negro peasantry, whether by outright seizure or even by purchase, became the pivotal point of the land policy of the large-scale landowning class.

One of the prerequisites for large-scale cotton farming is

the assurance of an abundance of "cheap" labor. Once the question of the land was settled in favor of the big landlords, the settlement of the labor "problem" could only follow in its train. If the former slaves had been given land from the large estates, then large-scale farming could only develop as in the North on the basis of a seizure of the public domain by capitalists and the expropriation of the petty producers. But large-scale farming in the cotton belt developed on the basis of the slave plantations and on the basis of labor which had never really been free. Here it was not necessary to free the tiller of the soil from the means of production—the land and farm implements—for he never had any; at most, Abolition had only destroyed a portion of the means of production, the slave, but had not taken the trouble to attach the potential free workers it had just created to their own means of production. The whole strategy of the Bourbon land policy now became to prevent just such attachment and to substitute for it a forced attachment to the soil. The tenant system as it evolved in the years immediately following the Civil War served this function.

The transformation of the plantation during the Reconstruction period was marked by a struggle on the part of the planters against the use of wage-labor. Towards the end of the war and for a brief period after the principal emphasis was upon wage-labor as the form of labor to supersede slavery. The Freedmen's Bureau, created by the federal government towards the close of the Civil War and whose main function was to supervise the labor relations of the former slaves, envisioned at the beginning a system of free wage-labor, at a level, of course, far below that of the North. During the brief period in 1864, when the Treasury Department had control over freedmen's affairs, its plan was to hire out all over 12 years old on the basis of fixed money wages.

The department published the following schedule of minimum wages: \$7 per month for males over 15 years old; \$5 for females over 15; for children between 12 and 15 half of the above amount.¹⁰ The verbal emphasis continued to rest upon the free aspect of labor, as far as the Freedmen's Bureau was concerned. One of its assistant commissioners in 1865 substituted for the wage-schedule three general directions: (1) labor

was to be free to compete in the open market; (2) the contracts between the employer and the employee were to be "equitable" and enforced by the Bureau "upon both parties," and (3) the unity of families was to be preserved.¹¹ Almost simultaneously with this order, General Howard, head of the Bureau, instructed the assistant commissioners and other officers to "never forget that no substitute for slavery, like apprenticeship without proper consent, or peonage . . . will be tolerated" —but, he made it distinctly understood, that it was not his purpose to change the existing laws in the South. "In fact," he declared, "it is the easiest and best way to solve every troublesome problem . . . relating to Negroes, by the time-honored rules established by wise legislation for other people."¹²

The former slaves had obtained their first taste of free wage-labor on the confiscated plantations supervised by agents of the Treasury Department and the Union Command or contracted out to operators. Wages here were supposed to range from \$7 to \$10 a month. But these wages rarely materialized. When the crops failed the workers receiving nothing and even when good crops were made the lessees swindled them out of their wages. When the Freedmen's Bureau was organized in 1865 it continued to administer these plantations until the end of that year when most of them were returned to their former owners.¹³ The government plantations often served as a source of labor for planters unable to force the Negroes to enter into a yearly labor contract. We find one newspaper advising the planters that "from these plantations planters can draw the hands they wish to employ and they are not only permitted but are required to accept the offer of employment, on penalty of treatment as vagrants."¹⁴

It seems, from the fragmentary reports available, that wage-labor was more in use during 1866-67 than in the following years. Thus, the *Jackson Clarion*, from the heart of the Mississippi Valley, reported that in 1866 the planters had furnished laborers with provisions and in addition paid them from \$10 to \$15 and sometimes \$18 a month (a rate much above that paid farm hands in many sections of the South to-day). The same method was used in 1867.¹⁵ But in the face of a great shortage of labor, occasioned by the withdrawal of large numbers of women and children from field work and the movement of

other Negro laborers to the cities and to the newer lands of the West, where higher wages prevailed, the planters turned their chief attention to binding the Negroes to the plantations.

If wage-labor was able to persist even for such a short time it was because of the rebellious state of the former slaves. They were adamant in their demand for land and refused to take on the yearly contracts offered by the planters through the services of the Freedmen's Bureau. Chaos in labor conditions prevailed and the labor supply was completely disorganized. Spontaneous possessions of land by Negro squatters occurred here and there; there was constant fear of further land seizures and insurrection if Congress did not supply the "forty acres and a mule" as had been promised by the Radical Republicans. Occasional confiscation of large landed estates for the benefit of the former slaves as well as actual squatting by Negroes occurred in the early days of Reconstruction. A notable example of the first, was the confiscation of the 10,000-acre plantation of Jefferson Davis, which was turned over to the former slaves and was run as a colony under the protection of Negro troops. Forty thousand Negroes squatted on the plantations of the Sea Islands (off Charleston, S. C.) and along the Georgia and South Carolina coast, where they established self-government and refused to abandon their rights to the land.¹⁶ In southeast Virginia, freedmen settled on abandoned plantations until forcibly ejected.¹⁷ All accounts testify to the fact that the Negroes demanded land, expected to receive it, and, in a number of instances, armed clashes ensued when they attempted to seize land.¹⁸

Under such circumstances, wage-labor, even with the powerful forced labor ingredients prevalent in the South, did not give the planter any assurance of retaining labor for the whole growing year. The struggle against wage-labor, as a form of labor, was in effect a struggle by the planters against capitalist forms of labor and against the higher degree of freedom inherent in such forms. The first steps taken in this direction were the vagrancy and apprenticeship laws, known as the Black Codes, which were passed in the first new state legislatures in 1865-1866, which were completely under the control of the planters. These laws were intended to assure a steadfast, thinly-veiled slave supply for the plantations.

The apprenticeship law empowered the county authorities to apprentice to employers all children under 18 years of age who were "without visible means of support" or whose parents "refused to provide for such minors," with the provision that former masters have the preference. The would-be master usually petitioned the court to bind minors to him. It often happened that the planter would thus obtain the children of freedmen working on his plantation, by declaring that such children had no means of support.¹⁹ The vagrancy laws permitted the courts to try any one, as the Alabama Act had it, who was "stubborn, refractory, or loitered away his time" for vagrancy, and if found guilty and unable to pay the fine the "vagrant" could be hired out to work it off. The Mississippi vagrancy law declared that:

All freedmen, free Negroes and mulattoes in the state over the age of 18 years, found . . . with no lawful employment or business, or found unlawfully assembling themselves together; either in the day or night time, together with all white persons so assembling with them on terms of equality, or living in adultery or fornication with Negro women, should be deemed vagrants.

The law further provided that any Negro, between the ages of 18 and 60, who could not pay a tax of \$1.00 (curiously enough called "poll tax"), was to be considered a vagrant whom the sheriff could seize and hire out for the amount of the tax and the costs.²⁰ Cash was so scarce among the Negroes, that this law practically condemned all the former slaves to servitude. It was in such manner that the planters attempted to guarantee themselves a labor supply which was not too far removed from the status of chattel slavery. When Congressional Reconstruction became effective towards the end of 1867 and a military dictatorship was established in the South, these laws were inoperative for a time.

All efforts were made to enforce the yearly labor contracts which were negotiated through the offices of the Freedmen's Bureau. The Bureau commissioners as well as the southern press generally complained bitterly that the Negroes refused to take on these contracts because they smacked too much of slavery and because the freedmen expected a division of the land. One

writer points out that this system, which he has the audacity to call "free hired labor," had little to differentiate it from slavery.

If the Negro expected to receive a daily or weekly wage—he writes—he had to work every day and work as directed. From daylight to dark was the universal rule on cotton plantations. Where no alternative of renting or hiring for a share presented itself, the freedmen attempted to reserve his liberty of movement by refusing to hire for a year. He greatly preferred to hire for a week or for a month, and in many cases would not contract for more than two days in the week. The presence of the overseer became extremely irksome to the Negroes, even where the control was very liberal.²¹

The vagrancy laws were called into service to enforce the yearly labor contract. Thus, in Alabama an "Act to Regulate Contracts and Enforce the Same" was in operation in 1865, providing that any freedman who abandoned labor was subject to the vagrancy law, and that any one who attempted to entice him away from his place of employment or help him in any way to desert it was subject to imprisonment and fine.²² During the same year General Swayne, head of the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama, issued an order under which the "Negro laborer is required to keep his part of the contract and to work faithfully, in penalty of being declared a vagrant and put to labor on some public work."²³ Thus the whole pressure, not only of his former master but also of his new friend, the representatives of the northern bourgeoisie, was brought to bear upon the former slave to bind him to the land.

With the cooperation of the Freedmen's Bureau, the planters in 1865 began to form county associations through which they could establish a uniform system of regulating labor. One of these, for instance, called the Labor Regulating Association of Clarke County (Alabama), open to any white inhabitant of the county who employed Negroes, controlled labor contracts and was to act as a sort of "arbitration board" to "settle" disputes between laborer and planter. Among its tasks were: to see to it that the Negro complies with the contract, establish provisions of the contract, prescribe labor rules, prevent Negroes from breaking contract to sign with another planter.²⁴ An Alabama editor cautioned the planters that they must do all possible

to hold their labor supply, which was being threatened by the lure of higher wages in the Mississippi Valley. "Every kind of inducement should be held out by the Southerners to their former slaves to stay here. . . ." ²⁵

From such forms of forced labor and veiled slavery which first appeared on the southern post-Bellum plantation it was but a short step to share-cropping. In fact, share-cropping was also taking form simultaneously on the plantations. In a letter to General Howard, Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau in Washington, a large landowner reports that he had already engaged about 400 freedmen for his plantations in Arkansas and Tennessee on a share-crop basis, and reported others doing the same. He thanks General Howard for his help. ²⁶

But only towards the end of 1867 was there a marked turn towards share-cropping, revealing the defeat of the revolutionary course in the settlement of the land question. Planters of Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, meeting in December, 1867, for instance, decided that the "general failure" of the planters was to be attributed to the "unfaithful work of the Negro, and in many instances, to the large wages paid for labor." The meeting planned a uniform wage and was in favor of payment by share of the crop. It set one-fourth of the crop plus rations the uniform plan for farm laborers. Only "when the freedman is better instructed as to economy and the profit of field labor" is money wages to be paid, which should not exceed \$6 per month for first class hands, and \$4 and \$5 for second and third class hands. It was also resolved that no "unfaithful hands" should be permitted to remain on the plantations. ²⁷

Commenting on the changes taking place on the plantation, the *Jackson Clarion* in 1868 announced that a "prudent system" was now being employed "by allotting the laborer a share of the crop, or wages in money at rates more approximating its value," as a result of which "farmers will have a balance to their credit for next year's operations." Planters are warned against "sowing the wild oats of which they reaped so bountifully in 1866-1867." ²⁸ The "wild oats" referred to was the wage system.

In those days when the merits of different forms of labor were being widely discussed, a refreshing frankness prevailed. "It is a fact that cannot be denied," declared one planter, "that

to make any kind of labor profitable we must have it under control. We must have it so we can direct it to secure the best advantage. Labor, if not rightly controlled and directed, would cease to be remunerative. In speaking of labor, we mean Negro labor." He suggested hiring labor by the year, paying each month only half the wages due and holding the balance for the end of the year. The laborer was not to be supplied with rations by the planter but must obtain his necessities elsewhere.²⁹ The main object of the plan was to bind the worker to the plantation for the whole year. The same object was sought by a farmers' meeting which resolved for uniform contracts with laborers "so made as to give the employer the right to require the laborer's service for the year" and to renew the "contract" at the end of the year for the following season. The following alternative contracts were suggested: (1) wage-labor, set at \$10 a month for first class hands, with rations; (2) share-cropping, the worker to receive one-third of the cotton and other crops and 13 bushels of meal or its equivalent; (3) for those feeding themselves and paying half of the expenses, one-half of the cotton and other crops; (4) that the employer furnish all food and necessities to the tiller of the soil, the rations being set at three and a half pounds of bacon and one peck of meal a week, and the worker was to receive one-quarter of the cotton and other crops. In all these contracts the planter must be assured labor for a whole year.³⁰

Still another system of labor employed for a time, especially in South Carolina, was the "time system," which approximated feudalism even more than the above. According to this system the laborer was to work four days on the planters' land and two days for himself on a few acres supplied by the landowner. The employer furnished the laborer with a team and 15 pounds of bacon per head for the year.³¹

Hand in hand with opposition to the wage-labor system the planters also opposed forms of tenancy which more nearly approached capitalist tenancy. For instance, a resolution of the Black Band Grange in Wilcox County, a Black Belt county of Alabama, stated "That we will not rent land to any laborer who is not able to furnish his own team and provisions, thereby forcing gangs to work for standing wages, or an interest in the

crop, and thus enabling the farmer to have entire control both their time and their labor."³²

The prevalence of attempts to induce immigration to South from Europe, India, China and from the North in the years following the Civil War reflects the extremely unsettled conditions of labor on the plantations and the refusal of the Negroes to submit to conditions little removed from chattel slavery. But the northern industrialists had first call upon the stream of "cheap labor" coming to these shores on a large scale, and the European or Eastern peasant would hardly come to a region where conditions resembled those he had left behind. These plans of the southern planters were doomed to failure, but their efforts are worthy of note if for nothing else than the "state of mind" they reflected. One editor, arguing for the employment of Chinese coolies on the plantations in 1869, points out that there had been no addition to the laboring classes since the war, that as a rule Negro women no longer worked in the cotton fields "and the labor power from this class is reduced full two-thirds as compared with 1860"; that male Negroes who had grown to majority since 1865 refused to work on the plantations, which was also true of "Negro lads from 12 to 18." But, he continues, "it is a well attested fact that cheap cotton cannot be had in the absence of cheap labor; and to this end it is suggested as the most feasible resort, the immigration and employment of Chinese. . . ." ³³ "The Chinese Labor Convention" was held the same year by the planters and was generally supported by the southern press.

Strenuous efforts were also made to induce the "poor whites" to work on the plantations, but these were also doomed to failure as long as the small white farmer still possessed some land and had the opportunity to buy land cheaply from the bankrupt plantations. There was also considerable doubt as to the "adaptability" of white labor to plantation conditions. "We are by no means certain," declares one editor, "that white labor is what our landowners want yet awhile. They want servant, labor to take the place of that to which they have been accustomed, laborers to occupy the social position of Negroes and to be treated like Negroes; and a desirable class of white men cannot be persuaded or hired to take the place of an inferior race."³⁴ This was the whole problem in a nutshell; social degra-

dation was associated with share-cropping and closely related forms of tenancy.

There was a strenuous opposition to share-cropping and related forms by the Negro land workers. The following complaint from a letter written in December, 1866, by the owner of several plantations, who is described as "one of the highest types of planters" in Georgia, reveals, in its own way, the mood of the freedmen:

I am offering them [the Negroes] even better terms than I gave them last year, to wit: one third of the cotton and corn crop, and they feed and clothe themselves, but nothing satisfies them. Grant them one thing and they demand something more, and there is no telling where they would stop. The truth is, I am thoroughly disgusted with the free Negro labor. . . .³⁵

In an article entitled, "Peonage in the South," a Republican paper of Alabama, after describing the system of peonage existing in Mexico, declared:

This miniature of slavery is eagerly desired and labored for by the old slave owners of the South. Planters meet and resolve that they will have nothing to do with them unless the colored people will voluntarily adopt the relation to them of semi-servitude. The low price of cotton has brought the laborer out in debt. The planter has gathered and disposed of the crop, and tells him he has no further use for him, but he can remain upon the place and work out his indebtedness at a rate of wages which would take him four years to release himself from the obligations incurred in one. The colored laborer is in distress, with a family dependent upon him and a system of peonage is inaugurated.³⁶

The Negro labor conventions, composed for the most part of farm laborers and Negro Reconstruction leaders, which took place throughout the South during this period, added to their demand for land, a demand for a system of free wage-labor. Thus, one of these conventions meeting in Montgomery, Ala., in January, 1871, went on record for wage-labor as opposed to share-cropping, and pointed out the advantage to the rational development of agriculture of the use of machinery and modern methods of agriculture.³⁷ As in the field of social legislation, the

former slaves were the outstanding proponents of the aims of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and took up the cutgels against the forms of forced labor carried over from a previous age. Another convention held in Montgomery in November, 1873, energetically opposed working for a share of the crop and demanded a "fixed amount of money wages per annum, paid monthly in money, securable by a lien on the personal estate of the employers." It declared that the laborer is not responsible for the state of the market nor for the failure of the crop and must be assured of his full pay. It also demanded separate contracts for each worker and the abolition of the squad system.³⁸ Another Negro labor convention, held in Columbia, South Carolina, in November, 1869, demanded that Negro farm labor should receive either half the crop or a *minimum daily wage* of 70 cents to one dollar.³⁹

The prevalence of share-cropping and related forms of labor over wage-labor during this period signified the firm establishment of the economic relics of slavery in the South. This outcome was reflected politically in the final defeat of the Reconstruction state governments of the South in 1876-1877 and the enthronement of reaction and counter-revolution. Henceforth the use of wage-labor on the land could only grow in proportion to the penetration of capitalism into southern agrarian economy and would encounter the strong resistance of the firmly embedded semi-feudal plantation, bolstered by a usurious credit system.

THE NATURE OF SHARE-CROPPING

SHARE-CROPPING and the related forms of labor which prevail in the plantation area are direct survivals of chattel slavery. While these survivals have their most direct bearing upon the situation of the Negro, they also affect large strata of the white farmers in the Old South. Before establishing the extent of these economic slave hangovers to-day and their relation to capitalist development in the South, it is first necessary to define their nature.

Forms of Land Tenure

Among non-landowning tillers of the soil in the South, there are three principal categories, excluding wage-labor. These are the share-croppers, the share-tenants and the renters. In the case of the share-cropper, all the means of production—the land, implements and working stock—are owned by the landowner. The cropper is assigned a portion of land and a cabin. For the use of the means of production the cropper is theoretically supposed to give the landowner half of the crop. Out of the other half of the crop (which is supposed to constitute either his wages in kind, or that portion of the crop left after he has paid his rent in kind) the landowner deducts for all food and other necessities advanced during the season, as well as for certain costs of cultivation, such as fertilizer. At all times the cropper works under the close supervision of the operator or his agents. He has no control over the nature of the crop, the acreage, methods of cultivation, nor over the marketing of the crop. He has none of that independence, as limited as it is by the dominance of all forms of monopoly, which is enjoyed by the very smallest of farmers or tenants in non-Southern areas. In reality, the settlement at the end of the year amounts to the

cropper having received barely enough subsistence from the planter in the form of advances to remain working, with a little cash thrown in very occasionally, perhaps at Christmas time, during an especially good year. More often, the cropper finds himself still in debt to the planter after the cotton picking and the marketing of the crop and he is forced to remain until the debt is worked off. Legalization of this state of affairs is to be found in the vagrancy statutes, emigrant agency laws and laws penalizing tenant farmers, croppers or wage-workers for failure to complete cultivation of the crop after once having entered into a contract with a planter.¹ The social oppression and degradation of the masses corresponding to such forms of economic bondage can well be imagined.

The share-tenant is distinguished from the share-cropper principally in the fact that he owns part of the means of production and makes an investment in the undertaking. He furnishes his own work stock and feeds it, and also supplies his own implements and seed. Rent is paid in kind, either one-fourth or one-third of the crop, and fertilizer expenses are shared in proportion to the ratio of each party's share of the crop. The share-tenant must also submit to supervision by the landowner or his agent. Since he must take advances from the landowner or the supply merchant directly, the share-tenant is also caught in the credit net and is accordingly subject to a high degree of supervision, including the marketing of the crop.*

There is a real distinction here in the status of the tiller of the soil, although the share-tenant's actual condition of semi-servitude is but little removed from that of the share-cropper. The share-tenant has a greater degree of independence in that he is to some extent his own capitalist, owns part of the means of production and makes part of the investment in the undertaking. This form of tenancy is sometimes combined with cash

* This does not apply in the cotton-growing regions outside the old plantation areas. In Texas for instance (with the exception of the eastern portion of the state where typical plantation conditions prevail) share-tenancy predominates but there is almost no supervision of the tenant. Tenancy in the new cotton areas of Texas developed on the basis of the breaking up of the ranches and not as in the Old South on the basis of the slave plantation: The tenant rented land from absentee landowners, banks, insurance companies or the Federal Government and operated his farm as an individual holding. The third-and-fourth renter (one-third of the corn and other miscellaneous crops and one-fourth of the cotton go as rent) is typical of this area. This tenant employs considerable hired labor on his farm of 100-200 acres, and the situation here is generally similar to that in the mid-West.

renting, when the share-tenant may pay cash rent for land on which he grows corn or some other food crop.

The renter most closely approaches the typical tenant of highly developed capitalist areas. The standing renter pays his rent for the land with a fixed amount of the product (rent in kind) and furnishes his own equipment and costs of production. In cash renting, the highest form of tenancy, the tenant pays a definite sum per acre or per farm as rent. Where such a renter is a small farmer, his work is often also closely supervised by the planter, who is interested in the crop for the rent as well as in many cases for advances of food and other necessities.

It is clear, therefore, that only the various categories of the share-, standing and cash tenants may properly be considered as tenants, although in their relations with the landlord there are strong semi-feudal elements, such as close supervision by the landowner and rent in kind, as well as the peculiar features of the southern credit system.* Of these, the share-tenant is the most harassed by the slave survivals and is often but slightly distinguished from the share-cropper. Capitalist tenants, in the sense of employment of wage-labor, are to be found almost exclusively among the classes of standing and cash renters, among whom there also occur large-scale capitalist farmers, as well as small or poor farmers.

It must not be imagined that there is a strict line of demarcation setting off the tenant classes, on the one side, in the sphere where only semi-feudal relations of production exist, and, on the other, where only capitalist relations of production exist. The economic slave survivals make themselves felt in all phases of southern economy, not only in agriculture but also in the forms of labor exploitation sometimes taken over by industry. And capitalist relations of production have also penetrated into

* As between share-cropping and the various forms of tenancy in the South, the former offers the most profitable field of exploitation for the planter. In "A Study of the Tenant Systems in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta" made by the Department of Agriculture in 1913, it was found that the average yearly income of share-croppers was \$333, of share-tenants \$398, and of cash renters \$478. The profit obtained by the landlord was in inverse proportion: his income from share-croppers yielded on an average of 13.6 per cent on his investment, in the case of share-tenants his return was 11.8 per cent and in the case of cash renters between 6 per cent and 7 per cent. "It is . . . easy to understand why, in practically all cases where landlords can give personal supervision to their planting operations they desire to continue the share-cropping system as long as possible," remarks Woofter in his *Negro Migration*, p. 75.

the plantation system, so that on any single plantation one may find side by side wage-labor, share-cropping, share-tenancy and renting. In close proximity, one will find as well even a small-scale self-sufficing economy, the capitalist tenant, the capitalist landowner and the plantation overlord.

Share-tenancy is on the borderline between share-cropping and higher forms of tenancy, and is really a transition between the two. In reality, share-tenancy corresponds to the *metayer* system in Europe, which served as a form of transition from the original forms of rent (labor rent, where rent is paid by the direct labor of the tiller of the soil on the land of the overlord; rent in kind; and money rent as a transformation of rent in kind) to capitalist rent. Although in the South of the United States share-tenancy had as its predecessor the slave system and bears its imprint, in form it does not differ from the *metayer* system. In his discussion of the "Genesis of Capitalist Ground Rent" in Volume III of *Capital*, Marx describes the *metayer* system as follows:

. . . The manager (tenant) furnishes not only labor (his own or that of others), but also a portion of the first capital, and the landlord furnishes, aside from the land, another portion of the first capital (for instance cattle), and the product is divided between the tenant and the landlord according to definite shares, which differ in various countries. In this case, the tenant lacks the capital required for a thorough capitalist operation of agriculture. On the other hand, the share thus appropriated by the landlord has not the pure form of rent On the one hand, the tenant, whether he employ his own labor or another's, is supposed to have a claim upon a portion of the product, not in his capacity as a laborer, but as a possessor of a part of the instruments of labor, as his own capitalist. On the other hand, the landlord claims his share not exclusively in his capacity as the owner of the land, but also as a lender of capital.²

This describes the situation of the southern share-tenant, who in addition to his labor also provides a portion of the first capital in the form of implements, work stock, seed, etc. The landlord has additional claim upon the product not only in that he has lent the land to the share-tenant but also other capital, in the form of food and other advances. But the above does not yet

describe the situation of the *share-cropper*, who provides no portion of the capital and can have no claim upon a portion of the product even in a restricted capacity as capitalist. Is the share-cropper, then, a free worker, free in the capitalist sense, *i.e.*, is he himself no longer a direct part of the means of production as a slave and do the means of production no longer belong to him?

Share-Cropping as Semi-slavery

American bourgeois economists are practically unanimous in defining share-cropping as wage-labor, even of a higher form than labor paid in cash wages and differing from the latter only in that it is paid in kind. The stages in development from a lower to a higher plane of farm labor are envisaged by them somewhat as follows: first comes wage-labor, then share-cropping, which is the first rung in the tenant ladder. Then, via the other forms of tenancy, the worker may graduate into the class of landowners. Prof. Robert P. Brooks, who has studied agrarian changes in Georgia, holds that:

The share-tenant is in reality a day laborer. Instead of receiving weekly or monthly wages he is paid a share of the crop raised on the tract of land for which he is responsible.³

The legal codes of some of the cotton States classify the cropper as a "wage laborer working for the share of the crop as wages." The Georgia Supreme Court in 1872 decided that, "The case of the cropper is rather a mode of paying wages than a tenancy" and has remained by this decision since. A later decision revealed the motivation behind this classification:

Where an owner of land furnishes it with supplies and other like necessities, keeping general supervision over the farm, and agrees to pay a certain portion of the crop to the laborer for his work, the laborer is a cropper and *judgments or liens cannot sell his part of the crop until the landlord is fully paid. . . .*⁴

The sum total of this decision is that as a wage-laborer being paid in kind, the cropper has no title to the crop, upon which the landlord has first call. On the other hand, the same objective is obtained in those States where the cropper is legally considered a tenant. Here, "where the landlord desires to avoid

statutory requirements, he may obtain full title by written agreement. In such cases the cropper loses his legal status as a tenant."⁵

C. O. Brannen, former agricultural economist of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, holds that the cropper occupies an intermediary position between the wage-worker and the farm tenant, between which positions he may be shifted, depending upon the state of the labor market, the planters sometimes being "obliged to raise their wage hands to the cropper status"! According to this writer, "the consistent increase of tenancy in the South since the Civil War indicates an improvement in the status of farm labor."⁶

Neither historically nor from the point of view of their economic content is this comparison between the various forms of labor and tenancy correct. Historically speaking, it is true that wage-labor, in a greatly modified form, was probably prevalent on the southern plantations in the first two years immediately following the Civil War. But this was an expression of the revolutionary situation which existed in the South at that time, and came much closer to a solution of the bourgeois-democratic tasks than did the system of share-cropping. Wage-labor, even as practiced during those years, was a much "freer" form of labor than the first forms of share-cropping. Share-cropping and related forms fulfilled the function of assuring labor the year through, and even longer, to the planter, of binding it to the plantation. And share-cropping continues to serve this function to the present day. Both Brooks and Brannen are forced to admit this, despite their smooth and utopian picture of the ladder of progress. "The wage hand was an uncertain factor in that he was liable to disappear on any payday," declares Brooks, in discussing the reasons for the prevalence of share-cropping. "The cropper is obliged to stay at least during an entire year, or forfeit his profits."⁷ In fact, within the limits of the share-cropping arrangement, the planter often, when plowing, planting, cultivating or picking demand it, quite forgets the individual business deal he is supposed to have entered upon with his croppers: he will work them in gangs, plowing or carrying out other operations over the whole plantation at one time, regardless of the "individual holdings."

In remarking upon an increase of tenancy, especially crop-

ping, during the World War and after, when large numbers of Negroes migrated out of the Black Belt, Brannen says:

. . . Considerable numbers of planters, both of cotton and sugar cane, have shifted in part during the World War from the wage to the tenant system. Under present conditions [in 1920] some of these will probably return to the wage system, *provided the labor supply becomes normal*. . . . When a scarcity of labor has occurred planters have been obliged to raise [!] their wage hands to the cropper status *or lose the labor and allow croppers to become renters*.⁸ (Our italics.)

A constant supply of labor is a prerequisite for capitalist relations of production and under capitalism it is a "normal" condition that there should always be at hand a large reserve labor army, or that such an army should be constantly in the process of becoming by the expropriation of the tillers of the soil or, as in the United States, that a constant labor supply migrate from regions where such expropriations are taking place. Only when there was a relative abundance of labor power at hand, which was not being depleted by industrial development, could wage-labor be safely employed on the southern plantations. As soon as this labor supply was seriously threatened, as happened during the World War, the immediate effect was greater utilization of share-cropping, *i.e.*, of binding the laborer to the soil more firmly. As Brannen himself so aptly puts it: "From the landlord's point of view, the use of cropper rather than wage-labor may be a means of stabilizing the labor supply."⁹ Speaking of the relative merits of the employment of day laborers, the same author states that while the planter has the advantage of not having to support them when their labor is not needed, "it [wage-labor] has the disadvantage of compelling the plantation operator to engage in costly competition for labor when labor is scarce."¹⁰ Both from the point of view of better conditions for the worker and from the point of view of its social nature, wage-labor is a higher form of labor than share-cropping and reflects in those regions where it is predominant the existence of a higher and more progressive stage of social development.

In reality, share-cropping is neither a higher form of labor than free wage-labor, nor does it hold a position between the latter and higher forms of tenancy. The significance of share-

cropping lies in the fact that it represents an intermediary stage between *chattel slavery*, on the one hand, and either wage-labor or capitalist tenancy on the other. A capitalist course of development in the South after the Civil War—the break-up of the estates and the establishment of petty-proprietorship side by side with large-scale capitalist farms, necessarily accompanied by the creation of a large army of wage-workers—would have precluded the carrying over of slave forms of labor as the dominant forms. Share-cropping, therefore, is an integral aspect of the incompleteness of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The share-cropper is neither a free wage-worker nor a chattel slave; he represents the transition between the two.

What, then, is the specific slave content of share-cropping? Under the slave economy, says Marx, or,

. . . that management of estates, under which the landlords carry on agriculture for their own account, own all the instruments of production and exploit the labor of free or unfree servants, who are paid in kind or in money, the entire surplus labor of the workers, which is here represented by the surplus product, is extracted from them directly by the owner of all the instruments of production, to which the land and, under the original form of slavery, the producers themselves belong.¹¹

Is the share-cropper that “unfree labor” on the “estates” in this characterization? He is; he is paid in kind and sometimes partly in cash, in the form of food and shelter, the amount of cash received in part determining the extent to which he is free. Not only in effect but also in form the entire surplus labor represented by the surplus product is extracted from the cropper *directly by the landlord*. The slave received a bare subsistence, the entire product he produced on the land was appropriated by the landowner. In the case of the share-cropper, one-half of the crop is claimed by the landlord from the beginning by virtue of his monopoly of the land and implements, thus assuring from the start a goodly portion of the surplus product produced by the tiller of the soil. But the landlord manages to extract directly the full surplus labor, additional unpaid labor, beyond that portion assured him from the start. The bare subsistence

and shelter, which are taken out of the remaining half of the crop and which generally represent the total wages received by the cropper. The cultivation of cotton as the principal commercial crop of the plantations causes these wages in kind to be paid not in the product raised, with the exception of corn, but in meager food supplies measured in terms of cotton raised by the tiller of the soil. In the case of free wage-labor, the surplus labor is extracted from the worker under cover of a contract and is hidden in the regular money-wage paid, which makes it seem as though the laborer were being paid for the entire duration of his labor for the employer. In the case of the share-cropper the method of extracting the surplus labor is more direct, with remuneration for the labor necessary to keep the worker alive not hidden in the money-wage, but paid directly in the necessary subsistence. Although the share-cropper no longer appears as a part of the means of production, as did the slave, the method or form under which the surplus labor is extracted by the landowner differs but very little from that of chattel slavery.

The existence of share-cropping in a highly developed capitalist society makes it possible for the cropper to appear occasionally in the capacity of a wage-worker, hiring himself out for money-wages at such times when his labor is not essential on his patch of the plantation. But this occasional appearance of the cropper as a wage-worker does not alter his basic characteristic as a semi-slave. He differs from the slave in that he is no longer a part of the means of production owned by the planter, and may occasionally appear as a free wage-laborer, but, like the slave, his entire surplus labor, as represented by the product of his toil, is appropriated directly by the landowner.

In his theoretical title to half the crop (a title which is not legally recognized in a number of southern States), in the entirely abstract promise of half the product of the cropper's labor, share-cropping contains elements of transition to capitalist tenancy. But this implied promise, as well as the transition to free wage-labor, is restricted by the fact that the share-cropper is not entirely "free" from the means of production, in this case, the land. He does not have permanent tenure of the soil, nor is he bound to the soil either by forced possession of it, as was the case of the serf (for under serfdom land was not a

commodity which could be freely bought and sold), or by chattel bonds to the landowner, as was the case with the slave. He is bound to the soil by direct coercive measures—by contract enforced by the State for the period of the growing year, and beyond that by peonage, by debt slavery which is made all the more coercive by the credit system under the domination of finance capital. The fact that he is not owned by the landlord allows him that degree of freedom which permits changing masters under certain circumstances. The existence of share-cropping in a capitalist environment also admits a greater degree of freedom in the presence of capitalist relations of production, which offer an avenue of escape from the semi-feudal relations between master and servant. It is precisely in this element of bondage to the soil, of direct coercive measures to enforce it, that the share-tenant and to a lesser degree other tenants in the South, despite their restricted capacity as capitalists, share with the cropper in suffering from the survivals of the slave system.

The price which the landowner paid for a slave was “the anticipated and capitalized surplus value or profit . . . to be ground out of him.”¹² For the landowner the money paid for the slave represented a deduction from the capital available for actual production, and this deduction from capital had ceased to exist for the landowner until he sold his slave once more. An additional investment of other capital in production by means of the slave was necessary before he began to exploit him.

Under share-cropping, the landowner is saved initial deduction from capital in the purchase of the slave; he invests only in his advances to the cropper and in the costs of production. It costs about \$20.00 a year under chattel slavery to feed and maintain a slave.* In the share-cropping system in normal years the average advance for each cropper *family* was about \$15-20 a month during the seven months of the growing season.¹³ In 1933, the average annual furnishings supplied by landlords to croppers amounted to from \$50 to \$60.¹⁴ Now, this advance is supplied to a cropper family, which usually has more than five and more often close to ten members, some of whom may earn a little on the side as wage-workers on the landlord farm or in a

* One southern planter estimated that an adult working slave could be supported for \$18.50 a year, as follows: meat, \$8.00; Indian corn, \$2.00; salt and medicine, \$1.00; clothing, \$7.50 (Nathaniel A. Ware, *Notes on Political Economy*, 1844, pp. 201-202).

nearby town. But the actual running investment in supplying the subsistence of life to the worker is hardly any higher, and sometimes even lower, than under slavery, and if one considers the initial deduction in capital in the purchase of the slave, even much less. In addition, the landowner is relieved of the necessity of maintaining his labor over dull periods as, for instance, during the months intervening between the chopping and picking of cotton and between the harvest and the planting of the next crop, or during periods of crises. Under terms of the contract, verbal or written, protected by the state power, the landlord may force the croppers to remain on the plantation without at the same time advancing food and other supplies, a state of affairs which becomes common throughout the cotton belt during periods of crises or of low prices for cotton.

The prolonged agrarian crisis, combined with the acreage reduction program of the Roosevelt administration, has produced an embarrassing over-abundance of labor in agriculture. This abundance of labor, under the present conditions of chronic crisis, cannot lead to the emergence of wage-labor as a dominant form in the plantation area. Whole armies of tenant families are being ejected from cotton production, but this does not seem to be accompanied by any marked increase in the use of wage-labor, nor in any important changes in the plantation organization. It has, however, resulted in a drastic reduction in the wages of farm laborers, more severe exploitation for the sharecroppers and more thorough mulcting of the tenants on the plantations. Planters are finding it more profitable to retain share-cropping and tenancy, cutting down all advances to the lowest subsistence level under threat of eviction, than to employ wage-labor even at the low rates now prevailing. A shortage of labor, even for the busiest portion of the season, is now entirely out of the question. The landless and homeless farm population has nothing to lure it to the city, where unemployment reigns, and a large portion of it is being kept on hand by relief agencies and subsistence farming, to meet any possible emergency call for additional labor. In the next chapter it is shown that from the beginning of the agrarian crisis in 1920 to 1930 there was, in fact, an increase in tenancy and share-cropping, despite a reduction in the number of farm operators.

Tenancy—North and South

Share-cropping and share-tenancy can only be dominant in a specific social content. Their prevalence is inconceivable where a highly developed form of capitalist agriculture prevails. Of the various forms of tenancy in the South, only cash renting can be likened to the dominant form of tenancy in the North.

Tenancy in the North is the culmination of an altogether different process than in the South. Northern agriculture is undiluted by feudal remnants. Here tenancy is, in general, the result of the impoverishment of the small and middle landowners by finance capital through mortgages and other forms of usury, monopoly prices in manufactured products, taxes, control of marketing of farm produce, exorbitant freight charges, etc. Here tenancy has developed on the basis of the capitalist relations of production; in the South it has grown out of the slave system. To a large extent the impoverished and expropriated farmers of the North vanished into the stream of population that was flowing from country to city. In the decade 1890-1900 the net migration from rural to urban communities was estimated at 2,500,000; in 1910-1920 it had reached 5,000,000.

Among these were the children of the farming families and farm workers who were displaced by increased agricultural production per worker made possible by the extensive use of farm machinery and improved methods of cultivation. But this flow of population also concealed the cry of expropriated farmers. The wide expanse of the public domain which did not become fully settled until the end of the 19th century and the flow of immigration from abroad had made possible the existence of extensive small-scale landownership precisely during the period of the most intensive development of large-scale industry. American industry was absorbing the expropriated peasantry of Europe with the result that the extensive expropriation of the farmers in the United States became unnecessary for the creation of a large labor reserve for industry. In addition, large-scale capitalist production in agriculture could develop upon the basis of the seizure of large parcels of the public domain by the capitalists, and the early and intensive use of farm machinery. But as the public domain became exhausted, as monopoly capitalism developed, expropriation began in

earnest as reflected in the large migration of the farm population to the cities in 1890-1900. The cutting off of the labor supply from abroad by the World War at a time when increasing demands were being made of industry hastened this expropriation as can be seen in the huge figure for the city-ward migration in 1910-1920, although a large portion of this migration came from the South.

To a certain extent the expropriation of the farmers was also reflected in the rapid increase of tenancy in the North. We say to a certain extent because an increase of tenancy does not necessarily mean a corresponding expropriation of the farm population. Many of the tenants in the North are in fact middle or well-to-do farmers, and some of them even large-scale capitalists. It is possible for a landowning farmer to become a tenant without shifting from his class as a small, middle or well-to-do farmer. The rapid increase in tenancy in the North since 1900 is, however, indicative of impoverishment, since foreclosures and other forms of expropriation not only deprived the farmer of his land and buildings, but also of his other capital, so that it was only as a much poorer capitalist that he could rent land, if at all, and continue as a farmer to be subject again to the same inexorable thirst of finance capital. Complete expropriation, not only of land and building, but also of machinery, livestock and other capital, as is more common during the present crisis, is reflected not primarily in the growth of tenancy, but in the increasing number of farm laborers, who have been so completely expropriated that they cannot even become small tenant farmers.

In the South, however, tenancy is not as a rule the result of the partial expropriation or impoverishment of the landowning farmer, but has as its general basis the existence of the large landed estates perpetuated after the abolition of chattel slavery, the monopoly of the land by the owners of estates and plantations. It is the result of the incompleteness of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and not, as in the North, the result of impoverishment of the farming population brought about by finance capital on the basis of capitalist relations of production in agriculture. Of course, this form of expropriation also takes place in the South, but it is not the chief basis for the existence of tenancy.

This leads to another difference of basic importance between the forms of tenancy in the North and in the South. Marx points out in his third volume of *Capital* that the progressive features of the capitalist mode of production in agriculture consist, on the one hand, in the rationalization of agriculture, which makes it capable of operating on a social scale and, on the other hand, in the development of capitalist tenants. While the latter has an adverse effect upon the former in the sense that tenants on the land hesitate to invest capital on improvements and often permit the land to deteriorate, the development of capitalist tenancy performs a two-fold progressive function. With regard to pre-capitalist forms of agriculture, it separates landownership from the relations between master and servant; the landowner himself or his manager is no longer the direct overlord of the tillers of the soil, as was the case on the feudal domain or under slavery.

With regard to post-capitalist development, capitalist tenancy "separates land as an instrument of production from property in land and landowners, for whom it represents merely a certain tribute of money, which he collects by force of his monopoly from the industrial capitalist, the capitalist farmer." Land thus more and more assumes the character of an instrument of production and as such is separated from private property in land which merely signifies a monopoly over a parcel of land which enables its owner to appropriate a portion of the surplus value produced by the workers on this land in the form of rent. This is "*reductio ad absurdum* of private property in land," declares Marx, and he points out that the capitalist mode of production "like all its other historical advances" brought about this as well as rationalizing of agriculture "by first completely pauperizing the direct producers."¹⁵ Capitalist tenancy, therefore, in making the landowner merely a rent collector, an appropriator of surplus labor, and in stripping the actual farmer of landownership, paves the way for the social revolution which will abolish all private property in land and make possible the socialist operation of agriculture.

Tenancy in the plantation South, because of the foundation upon which it developed and exists to-day, does not exhibit the progressive features of capitalist tenancy. As regards the past, tenancy did not succeed in separating on a general scale

landownership from the relations between master and servant; in fact, *it prolonged and strengthened* these relations, it perpetuated in a highly developed capitalist country powerful remnants of chattel slavery. Nor, as far as the dominant forms of tenancy are concerned, was its corollary developed, the separation of land as an instrument of production from private property in land. The southern landlord who rents his land out to share-tenants or even renters, maintains direct supervision over production, despite the intervention of rent in kind which, in this case, does not serve to draw a sharp line of distinction between the relations of production and landownership.

Without possessing any of the progressive features of capitalist tenancy, the tenant system in the South partakes of its chief evils. Tenancy is one of the greatest obstacles to the rational development of agriculture because the tenant will not invest in improvements on the land, which would only add to the capital of the landowner. A special study revealed that out of some 55,000 rented farms in the United States for which data was collected, 36 per cent reported decreasing fertility of the soil. But in 50 counties of the South, 56 per cent of the rented farms were reported as decreasing in fertility. The greater the number of tenants under a single landlord, the greater the loss in soil fertility; 63 per cent of the landlords in the 50 southern counties who have five or more tenants, a unit which in most cases may be classed as a plantation, reported decreasing soil fertility.¹⁶

The retarding influence of tenancy on the technical development of agriculture is further accentuated in the South by the cultivation, year in and year out, of cotton as the commercial crop, which has the effect of deteriorating the soil and demands advanced methods of preservation if the land is not ultimately to become useless. Many of the tenants, especially on the non-plantation and small plantation farms, own only the most wretched stock and implements and are in no position to give the soil the attention it needs. The credit system, with its insistence upon cotton as the principal crop, does not permit the farm operator, if he desires credit, to rotate crops and is thus a powerful factor in bringing about the utter desolation of the soil in large stretches of the older cotton belt.

The technical primitiveness of southern agriculture is a direct

outcome of the plantation economy and its credit structure. The *Blue Book of Southern Progress* unashamedly reports that two-thirds of the working mules of the country are to be found in the farms of the cotton belt. The mule signifies lack of machinery and backward methods of agriculture. The value of machinery per farm in the cotton states east of the Mississippi River is only \$100 to \$150, while in Iowa and North Dakota it is over \$1,000, and the United States average is \$442.¹⁷ In the cotton belt there are only 17 cattle to the square mile as compared with 55 in the corn belt.¹⁸ Prof. Charles S. Johnson, in his recent study of Macon County, a typical Black Belt county of Alabama, found that out of the 612 Negro farm families there were 299 families who owned not a single farming implement, not even a hoe or a plow, and that they were using the same methods of cultivation as under slavery.¹⁹

How extensive are the semi-slave forms of labor? Has almost three-quarters of a century of capitalist development in the South resulted in at least a preponderance of the modern form of exploitation? Or are these relics of the slave plantation still to be uprooted, *i.e.*, are the tasks of a bourgeois-democratic revolution still on the order of the day for the South? These questions are the subject of the next chapter.

THE PERSISTENCE OF SLAVE SURVIVALS

IT is precisely on the plantations that the survivals of slavery in the form of share-cropping and share-tenancy are the strongest.

Important supplementary information regarding the forms of labor and tenancy on a portion of the plantations covered by the 1910 census is given by C. O. Brannen in his study, *Relation of Land Tenure to Plantation Organization* (1926). On 22,002 tenant plantations in 1910, only 28.5% of the improved land was worked by wage hands and the balance by croppers and tenants. But in 1920, in the 161 selected cotton plantations investigated by Brannen, the proportion of wage-labor land was only 18.7%.

The data on wage-labor make no distinction with regard to how much of this wage-labor is supplied by the tenants themselves, working on the landlord's portion of the plantation. That a good portion of this labor is recruited from the tenantry is indicated by the author who states that "In the Mississippi Valley, and other sections to the east, the tendency has been to restrict the tenant acreage so as to use the tenant himself and tenant families as extra labor on the landlord's individual farm."¹ Much of this labor is actually unpaid, since the tenant or members of his family may be called upon by the landlord to work off debts or "balance the account" by labor on the plantation farm. The extent of this kind of unpaid labor is also shown by the fact that on 110 plantations for which figures are available, an average of 32% of all cultivated land was worked by women and children in 1920. Much of this labor is unpaid and a good portion of it is undoubtedly performed on the individual farm of the landowner. The largest percentage of the cultivated land worked by women and children was in the tobacco belt (59%), and the largest in the cotton belt was

in Alabama (52%). These are admittedly conservative estimates.²

As low as is the proportion of land worked by wage-labor on the plantations, it is even still lower in the large holdings of scattered tracts of land not operated by plantation methods. In the same counties in which were situated the plantations which were the subject of the 1910 census study, only 10.4% of the improved land on the non-plantation tracts was operated by wage-labor. Unfortunately, there are no figures more recent than the 1910 census which make such distinctions between the plantation and non-plantation economy with regard to farm labor.

That practically all the wage-labor employed on the plantation, whether it be regular farm hands or recruited as needed from the tenantry, is employed on the landlord's individual holding is shown by supplementary data on crops gathered by Brannen in a study of 161 cotton plantations in 1920. On these plantations 59.6% of the cultivated acreage was in cotton, 27.7% in corn and 12.7% in other crops. The corn and other crops are raised for purposes of rationing the tenants and cropper and as feed stock. But if the tenant- and cropper-operated land is separated from the plantation land operated by wage-labor, a different picture is obtained. On the cropper and tenant land 68.3% was in cotton, 26.9% in corn and only 4.8% in other crops. On the land operated by wage-labor, however, the reverse was true: only 19.7% of the cultivated land was in cotton, 30.3% in corn and 50% in other crops. The money crop, cotton, is the principal crop of the share-croppers and tenants, while the food crops are raised by wage-labor on the land retained by the landowner for purposes of rationing and advances to the tenants.

The percentage of the cultivated land worked by the various groups of laborers, however, is not a true measure of the actual proportion of wage-laborers, croppers and tenants, since it is possible for a smaller number of wage-workers to cultivate a proportionately larger area due to the use of machinery and improved methods of cultivation. More exact data is supplied for 161 cotton plantations in 93 selected counties scattered throughout the cotton belt. On these plantations in 1920 there were 1,028 regular wage hands, little more than six per planta-

tion, of whom less than half were day hands and the rest employed by the month. On the same plantations there were 6,470 croppers and tenants, averaging about 40 per plantation. It is evident that semi-slave forms of labor are overwhelmingly predominant on the plantations. Of this number 46.1% were croppers and 53.9% tenants. On the Louisiana and Georgia cotton plantations, however, the percentage of croppers was as high as 61 and 73, respectively.³

But of the tenants the greatest proportion were share-tenants who are but little removed from share-croppers. Of the total tenants on the selected cotton plantations, 54% were share, operating 57% of the cultivated tenant land; 31% were standing-renters, operating 25.2% of the tenant land; and 15% were cash-renters operating 17.8% of the land. Share-cropping is the dominant form of exploitation on the plantations, with share-tenancy only second in importance. Of all the tillers of the soil on the 161 cotton plantations, 40% were share-croppers, 25% were share-tenants, 14% standing-renters, 14% regular wage-workers and 7% cash-renters. These figures are more or less typical of the plantations throughout the cotton belt, since the selected plantations from which these figures are gathered are scattered throughout the belt and were chosen as typical.

Furthermore, practically the whole working unit of a plantation is composed of Negroes. Although there were no figures available by color on the number of wage-workers on the plantations, it is a well-known fact that they are practically all Negroes. The same holds true for the share-croppers on the plantations. According to Brannen's figures, on the plantations located in 93 selected counties,* 83% of all tenants (excluding croppers) were Negroes. His figures also indicate that white tenancy occurs to any large extent only in land operated by non-plantation methods. In the 93 counties as a whole, in which the selected plantations are located, Negro tenants comprised only 64.5% of all the tenants as compared with 83% on the plantations. The most powerful slave remnants, effecting the Negro toilers of the soil, are concentrated on the plantation, which serves as a focal point radiating around itself a whole

* Of the 93 counties which were the subject of this study, 59 were situated within our 1930 Black Belt; 25 in the Border Territory (9 in the Texas and Louisiana rice area and 7 in Texas cotton) and 9 adjoining the Border Territory.

network of similar forms affecting, to a less extent, the white farm toilers.

Is the Plantation Disappearing?

In a supplement to the study which we have cited,⁴ Brannen poses the question: Is the plantation losing ground? An affirmative reply is justified, he says, "where the proportions of staple crop acreage, of Negro labor, and of croppers have been materially reduced." Using this criteria for the 93 selected plantation counties, and comparing data of the 1920 and 1925 agricultural census, the author concludes that "the plantation system in the western cotton belt and in the sugar-cane and rice areas continues since 1920 practically unmodified," but that in the southeastern states the decadence of the plantation system is accentuated partly by competition from the West and partly because of the boll weevil.* Although it is true that the old plantation regions of the Southeast were less able to withstand the agrarian as well as the more recent economic crisis, this does not by any means signify that the remnants of slavery are being uprooted and being replaced by wage-labor. The writer has seen sectors of this old plantation region where huge domains of soil lie fallow and the countryside is entirely desolate. Where plantations have gone under as a result of the crisis general decadence more often prevails, with the tenantry operating on a scattered and extremely small scale. For while the plantations are the domain of the economic slave survivals *par excellence*, these also are present in practically all cropper and tenant relations even on the non-plantation farms of the Black Belt. A further examination of data on tenancy is necessary to gauge the real extent of the semi-slave relationships.

While the regular census returns on southern tenancy give no separate data for plantations, they provide a measure of the

* Brannen found that the percentage of croppers from 1920 to 1925 gained in all the selected plantation districts except in the Alabama-Mississippi Black soil region in Florida (one county) and in the sugar-cane regions of Louisiana. The increase in share-cropping in the Mississippi-Yazoo Delta was from 59.9% to 70.7%; in the Arkansas-Tennessee counties from 45.0% to 53.0%; in Georgia from 51.9% to 61.7%. But in practically all the selected counties the proportion of Negroes of all croppers and tenants was reduced. In the 93 plantation counties there was a relatively high increase in staple crop acreage in the western areas, and a decrease in the selected counties of Georgia and the Carolinas, the former of 40.4% and the latter of 14.3%. But Brannen states the plantation has experienced less reduction in staple crop than the state as a whole.

extent of the slave survivals, more recent than that given by the plantation census of 1910 and the supplementary study of 1920. With the help of this data we can correlate the extent of tenancy with the concentration of the Negro population, and also make some important historical comparisons. Significant conclusions are provided when the data on tenancy by county is arranged to correspond with the Black Belt divisions, as established in the chapter on population.*

The 1930 census reveals the following general picture:

1. Of the total farm operators in the Black Belt, 60.3% are Negroes, as compared with 27.5% in the Border Territory and 6.9% in other southern territory.

2. Of the total farm operators in the Black Belt, 70.2% are tenants and croppers, as compared with 57.0% in the Border Territory and 48.1% in other southern territory. *The Black Belt is the area of the greatest tenancy.*

3. Of the total tenants and croppers in the Black Belt, 71.6% are Negroes as compared with 36.0% in the Border Territory and 9.7% in other southern territory. Furthermore, of all the Negro farm operators in the Black Belt, 83.3% are tenants and croppers, as compared with 50.2% for the white farm operators.** *The Black Belt is primarily the area of Negro share-cropping and tenancy.*

The area in which the Negroes constituted more than half of the population in 1930 is at the same time the area of the most intensive tenancy, which is primarily Negro tenancy. Of the total tenants and croppers in this area only 28.4% are white, who, as we have seen, are for the most part attached to non-plantation farming. The Black Belt, then, in 1930 continued to exhibit in strong measure the principal features associated with a plantation economy.

But of the total number of Negro tenants and share-croppers in the Black Belt in 1930 over half (54.8%) were share-croppers. Share-cropping, which embodies the strongest slave elements, therefore remains predominant on the plantations.

* See Appendix III.

** In the Border Territory the respective figures are: for Negro, 74.5%; for white, 50.3%; and in other southern territory, 66.8% for Negroes and 46.7% for whites.

There is available very little data of a kind which permits precise judgment as to the degree of capitalist relations which has developed among the other strata of the farm population. Half of the white farm operators and one-sixth of the Negro in the Black Belt are landowners, but this group includes the petty producer who does not employ any wage-labor, the middle farmer and the large landowner. The tenants (excluding share-croppers) are divided by the census into two categories, cash tenants and other tenants. In the latter are lumped together standing-renters, cash-share-tenants (tenants who pay rent for the land partly in kind and partly in cash) and share-tenants. The most widespread of the tenant relationships is share-tenancy, which is closely related to share-cropping.

Wage-labor and machinery are the best indicators of the extent of capitalist development. These indicators are mutual, since the employment of machinery would mean the squeezing out of the tenants and the increased use of wage-labor, for the implements of the tenant are replaced by those of the landlord new technical methods make obsolete the division of the land into separate tenant holdings, the share-cropper or the tenant is no longer suitable for work with improved implements and his place is taken by the day laborer. If the census provided data on machinery and the employment of wage-labor by tenant categories, by the size of the farms operated by the owners or by the size of the tenant holdings, it would be possible to determine the degree of capitalist relations among the various groups of tenants and landowners. But the only figures given for both wage-labor and machinery are for the owners, managers and tenants (as a whole, including share-croppers), and these figures are given only as averages. This data, however, does give an indication of the low stage of capitalist development in southern agriculture, especially when compared with capitalist areas of the North.

We shall take the data for the state of Mississippi as more or less typical for the Black Belt as a whole. Mississippi is a leading plantation state, half of its population is Negro, and 70.9% of its tenants and croppers are Negroes, a proportion very close to the Black Belt as a whole (71.6%). The employment of wage-labor was reported by 27.5% of the owners in 1929, by

64.5% of the managers of plantations and farms (there are 999 managers in the State) and by 10.4% of the tenants. The average number of days of hired labor per farm reporting was for owners 117, for managers 1,720 and for tenants 49. Only 23% of the owners and managers and 6.8% of the tenants reported expenditures for implements and machinery in 1929. The extremely low stage of capitalist development in agriculture revealed by these figures becomes even more apparent when compared with North Dakota, one of the most-highly developed capitalist areas. In this State 75.8% of the owners, 77.9% of the managers and 71.1% of the tenants reported the hiring of wage-labor in 1929. The average number of days of hired labor was 161 for the owners, 591 for the managers and 125 for the tenants. Expenditures for farm machinery was reported by 54.8% of the owners and 49.5% of the tenants.*⁵

Thus, almost three-quarters of the owners in Mississippi were petty-producers employing no wage-labor at any time during the year. Only one-tenth of the total tenantry could in any way be considered as capitalist tenants. The tenants employing wage-labor are probably to be found almost exclusively among the cash-tenants and to some extent among the standing-renters. The difference between the nature of tenancy in the North and in the plantation area is most strikingly shown by the fact that 71.1% of the tenants of North Dakota employed wage-labor.

The low number of livestock, which we have already observed, and the slight development of dairying in the South are also symptomatic of a low degree of development of capitalist agriculture. Thirteen southern states account for only 6.9% of the volume of milk products in the United States.⁶ Dairying needs a large outlay of capital, intensive conditions of culture and large local markets. Truck farming in the South has developed only outside of the Black Belt, principally in Florida, south-central Georgia and along the Gulf coast of Texas. It demands intensive cultivation and a large capital outlay for fertilizer and labor, which would not be "furnished" by the southern credit system.

* For the United States as a whole 48.1% of the owners, 69.1% of the managers and 32.9% of the tenants reported an average of 153, 1,112 and 119 days of farm labor, respectively. Of the owners 31.5% and of the tenants 22.9% reported expenditures for farm machinery.

A further idea of the relative economic position of the various groups of tenants and owners may be obtained from the value of implements and machinery on the farm. The 1930 summary for the South as a whole gives the average value of implements and machinery as follows (in order of amount): white farm owners, \$336; other white tenants, \$234; white cash-tenants, \$207; Negro owners, \$111; other Negro tenants, \$77; Negro cash-tenants, \$65. That the value of machinery for the group of "other tenants" is higher than for cash-tenants, in the case of both the white and Negro, is probably accounted for by the fact that a large number of share-tenants are included in the "other tenants," who may have been partly supplied with implements by the plantation owners or the landlord. While this cannot be a strict measure of class division (these are average values per farm, including the well-to-do, middle and the small), still it gives some idea of the relative economic position of the mass of members of the various groups. It will be noted that the value of machinery on the farms of the Negro owners is below that even of the white tenants, and in the case of the Negro cash-tenants and "other tenants" it is less than one-third the value of machinery in the respective groups of white tenants. This indicates the extremely low economic status of the mass of Negro farmers in the South, far below even the low standard of the mass of southern white farmers.

Since we cannot give a closer approximation of the relative economic status of the tenant groups, other than the general statements above, and since the cash-tenants as listed by the census cannot be differentiated as to their class position from the group counted as "other tenants," we will hereafter make a distinction only between croppers and tenants, the latter term including all categories of the tenantry. It should, however, be well noted that the overwhelming majority of the tenants are comprised in the group "other tenants" of which the greater number are share-tenants, who in their economic position, have much in common with the share-cropper.

The very persistence and growth of share-cropping and tenancy in the Black Belt indicates not, as one writer has it, the "improvement of the status of farm labor in the South," but the persistence of the economic survivals of slavery. And

these survivals have remained as a powerful force *despite* the penetration of capitalism into the South as expressed principally in the process of industrialization and the increasing attraction of highly developed non-southern areas upon the Negro peasantry in the Black Belt. We have already shown, on the basis of the 1910 plantation census, the dominant position held by the plantations in the agrarian economy of the Black Belt. By comparing the data on tenancy and share-cropping since 1890 we may see how the slave survivals fared during the period of the most intensive industrialization of the South. The growth of tenancy in the Black Belt over a forty-year period is shown by the following figures:

	<i>Total Farm Operators</i>	<i>Total Tenants and Croppers</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
1890	592,844	322,650	54.4
1930	982,010	689,581	70.2

This tremendous increase in share-cropping and tenancy, over the period of capitalist development in the South, signifies in the main the growth of the economic survivals of slavery, although it also includes elements of the impoverishment of small land-owners who have been forced into the tenure classes. The latter aspect is reflected principally in the growth of tenancy among the white farmers in the South. We will therefore consider data for tenancy and share-cropping among the Negro peasantry as more symptomatic of the slave survivals. We will limit ourselves to the period 1910-1930, which covers the most intensive industrialization in the South and the migrations of the war and post-war period.

The census does not give the number of Negro share-croppers separately for 1910 and 1920, but lists them with tenants. This deprives us of the possibility of tracing for this decade the effect of capitalist development upon share-cropping, the most powerful form of slave survival. These figures, however, are given for 1925 and 1930. The data for the Black Belt is summed up in the following table:

THE NEGRO QUESTION

NEGRO TENURE IN THE BLACK BELT, 1910-1930*

(Based Upon the Census for the Respective Years)

	1910	1920	1925	1930
Negro farm operators	607,389	620,252	548,785	592,687
Tenants and croppers	488,819	502,318	445,643	493,844
% of farm operators	80.5	81.0	81.3	83.2
TENANTS . . . . .	...	...	207,873	223,239
% of farm operators . . . . .	...	...	37.7	37.6
CROPPERS . . . . .	...	...	237,770	270,605
% of farm operators . . . . .	...	...	43.6	45.6
Owners and part-owners	118,570	117,934	103,142	98,843
% of farm operators	19.5	19.0	18.7	16.8

Between 1910 and 1925 there was a net decrease of almost 10% in the number of Negro farm operators, of which 43,176 were tenants and croppers, and 15,428 were owners and part-owners. The decrease in the number of Negro farmers was a result chiefly of the migration, which was already coming to an end by 1925. But it is evident from the above table that the factors leading to the migration, and the migration itself, did not decrease the hold of the tenant system upon the Negro land workers; in fact the proportion of Negro tenants and croppers continued to increase.

The Migration and Tenancy

Those who hailed the migration as the beginning of a tendency which would of itself dissipate the area of Negro majority and shatter the plantation economy, are completely refuted by the above data, especially by the figures for 1925 and 1930. During this five-year period the factors leading to the mass migration of the preceding years were no longer operative. This is reflected in an increase of 43,902 Negro farm operators or an increase of 8% during this period, as compared with 3.5% for the white farm operators of the Black Belt. But the number of Negro owners and part-owners continued to decline, while the greatest increase occurred in the number of share-croppers. The proportion of the latter group increased from 43.6% of the total number of Negro farm operators in 1925 to 45.6% in 1930,

* For Negro tenure by Regions see Appendix III, Tables 1 and 2.

while the group of tenants held its same relative position. Share-cropping, the most direct derivative of chattel slavery, is increasing. *The industrialization of the South and the immigration have not checked the economic slave survivals.*

If the figures for land tenure are taken separately by regions of the Black Belt* it is found that in all but the Alabama region (IV) there has been an increase of tenancy and share-cropping among the Negro farm operators. The greatest increase between 1910 and 1930 occurred in those sections which had not suffered an absolute decrease in the number of Negro farm operators, and where there had previously existed the highest proportion of Negro owners—in the Virginia, North Carolina and Texas sections of the Black Belt (regions I, II and VI). In 1910 these regions, containing only 16% of the total number of Negro farm operators in the whole Black Belt, had 35% of the total number of Negro owners in the Black Belt. The highest degree of Negro landownership occurred in the Virginia region, where the plantation had practically disappeared. Over half of the Negro farm operators were landowners in this sector, while in the North Carolina region the proportion was almost 35% and in Texas almost 30%. But since 1910 tenancy and cropping among Negro farm operators increased from 48.1% to 59.5% in the Virginia region; from 65.2% to 74.9% in the North Carolina Black Belt, and from 70.6% to 80.1% in the Texas region. The group of share-croppers came to represent a larger proportion of the Negro farm operators in all three sections.

Here, more than in any other sector of the Black Belt, the growth of tenancy is associated with the expropriation of the Negro landowner. But it is also significant that even in those areas where the plantation economy is least important and where landownership among the Negroes had developed most there had taken place a *drastic increase* in the relative importance of those forms of land tenure and labor left as a heritage by chattel slavery.

In the three principal regions of the Black Belt (III, IV and V), which were affected most by the war migration and where there was a decrease in the number of Negro farm operators between 1910 and 1925, there was no appreciable decrease in the relative position of tenancy and share-cropping. In the

* See Appendix III, Table 2.

oldest cotton region, South Carolina-Georgia, a constant decrease in the number of Negro farm operators has taken place since 1910. It is the only region of the Black Belt in which the decline in the number of Negro farm operators continued into the period 1925-1930. Factors such as serious loss of soil fertility, competition of the fresher cotton farms towards the West, had aggravated the crisis and had brought about general deterioration in the agriculture of this region. This is reflected in a decrease of 26% in the number of Negro farm operators between 1910 and 1930. But during this same period the proportion of tenants and croppers had increased from 81.7% to 82.5%, while the proportion of share-croppers alone had increased from 41.8% in 1925 to 43.6% in 1930. The number of Negro owners had declined by 29% between 1910 and 1930.

The Alabama Black Belt is characterized by a larger degree of tenancy and a lesser degree of share-cropping than prevails elsewhere in the cotton belt. Over half of the Negro farm operators are tenants and less than one-third are share-croppers. This indicates the presence of many scattered tenant holdings and of smaller plantation units. Yet, in 1930 the proportion of tenants and share-croppers was 83.1%, as compared with 85.6% in 1910. In the period 1925-1930 the number of Negro farm operators was again increasing, while the proportion of tenants alone increased from 52.8% to 53.8%.

The Mississippi Valley was the only one of the three principal Black Belt regions which in 1930 had more Negro farm operators than in 1910. The only decrease which occurred was a slight one between 1920 and 1925, but this was replaced by a rapid increase in the following five years. This is the region of the largest and most highly developed plantations. As is to be expected, it is also the area of the greatest tenancy and share-cropping. Between 1910 and 1930 the proportion of tenants and share-croppers among the Negro peasantry rose from 87.2% to 90.4% and both in 1925 and 1930 the proportion of share-croppers was around 57%.

From the above data, it is evident that, while the migration of the years 1916-1925 had the effect of draining off considerable numbers of the Negro peasantry from the Black Belt, it did not result in any decrease in the hold of the economic slave survivals upon the Negro tillers of the soil who remained. The

migration produced an opposite effect. There has been an increase of tenancy and share-cropping. Even in the oldest sector of the cotton belt, where the general economic crisis aggravated by permanent deterioration in agriculture was most keenly felt and where a general decadence in the agrarian economy is of longer standing, the semi-slave forms of labor and tenancy are just as extensive as before.

To corroborate the main conclusion flowing from the above data we may cite an observation of Prof. Charles S. Johnson who recently completed a study of Negro culture in Macon County, Alabama. Economically and socially this county is typical of the Black Belt—82.3% of its population is Negro, and nine-tenths of the Negro farmers are tenants. But it is endowed with two of the leading Negro institutions of the South, the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (which prides itself for its work among farmers) and the United States Veterans Hospital, a Jim-Crow institution for Negro veterans of the World War. "The essential observation of this study," concludes Prof. Johnson, "is that the Negro population . . . has its own social heritage which, in a relatively complete isolation, has had little chance for modification from without or within. Patterns of life, social codes, as well as social attitudes, were set in the economy of slavery."⁷

Farm Owners and Wage-Workers

The degree of landownership among the Negro farmers should be an indicator of the extent to which freedom from the plantation and its direct economic bonds is obtained. In view of the fact that Negro leaders of the type of Booker T. Washington have seen salvation within the bonds of the existing system in the growth of a large Negro landowning class, which would serve as the basis for the development of a Negro bourgeoisie, the actual facts should also serve as a measure of the correctness of that philosophy. Faith in the possibility of the development of Negro landownership after the failure of the Civil War decade to solve the land question in favor of the freedmen, is nothing more nor less than faith in the ability of capitalism to eventually solve the Negro question. The building of a self-contained Negro business and market, which is proposed as a solution of the Negro question by present bourgeois leaders

among the Negroes, is a faith of the same order. Capitalism has shown itself no less ruthless in the expropriation and retardation of the Negro landowner than of the small Negro businessman.

The height of Negro landownership was reached in 1910, when there were 218,972 Negro owners and part-owners of land, with a total acreage of 12,847,348. By 1930 the number of Negro owners in the United States had fallen to 181,016, and the total acreage operated by Negro owners to 11,198,893. This presents quite a different picture than the rosy one of ascent up the tenant ladder to proprietorship; if, indeed, any Negro cropper or tenant had been able to reach the top rung of the ladder, he only found himself among those who were even more quickly being expropriated by capitalism and sent flying down to the bottom again. For it was very little indeed that the average Negro landowner had with which to face monopolies and bankers. The acreage per farm of the average Negro owner was below half, his value of land and buildings one-fourth and his value of implements and machinery one-third that of the average white landowner in the South.

In the Black Belt the number of Negro landowners decreased by 17% between 1910 and 1930, and their proportion of all the Negro farmers in the Black Belt fell from 19.5% to 16.8%. While the Black Belt contains close to 70% of all Negro farm operators in the country, it has only less than half of the Negro landowners. Only one-tenth of the total Negro farm operators live outside of the Black Belt and Border Territory, yet almost 30% of the Negro landowners are situated in that area. As is to be expected, it is in the area least hampered by the slave survivals where there has been a greater degree of landownership.

The great bulk of the Negro landowners are decidedly small farmers, as measured by the size of holding. Generally speaking, size of holding does not give a true picture of the economic status of the farmer, for in areas of intensive agriculture, like truck farming in the vicinity of large cities, it is possible for a farmer to be a big capitalist on a very small holding. But in the case of the Negro farmers in the South, this is an indication of his economic standing, because in most cases they are cotton farmers who, as a rule, cannot use intensive means of cultiva-

tion beyond a certain degree. The extremely low value of farm implements per Negro landowning farm also shows that very little intensive cultivation is possible. Yet 55% of all Negro landowners have holdings of less than 50 acres, and 22% under 20 acres, as compared with an average acreage of 134 for all owners in the South. Slightly more than one-fourth of the Negro owners have farms of between 50 and 99 acres, only 13% have holdings of from 100 to 174 acres, and 5% between 175 and 499 acres. Only 0.7% have holdings of over 500 acres.

As is the case with all data collected by the census in southern agriculture, only that acreage worked by the landowner himself (or, with the help of wage-workers) is listed as a holding, and the tenant acreage is listed as a separate farm, so that the above is not a true picture of the extent of landowning in the higher groups. But in view of the general retardation by semi-feudalism and capitalism of economic growth among the Negro people, it is safe to say that no very important group of big Negro landowners exists, and even a relatively small group of what might be termed middle, or tolerably well-off, Negro farmers. Among the Negro tenants only 3% work acreages of over 175. Unfortunately, there are no figures available on the employment of wage-labor by Negro farmers, which would be the best indicator of the degree of development of capitalist class relations among them. But such relationships are probably only at a very low stage of development, although there are scattered large-scale Negro capitalist farmers, and a sizeable group of middle farmers who employ wage-labor.

The great bulk of Negro tenants as well as landowners may be classed as in the lowest strata of the rural petty-bourgeoisie. Because of their transitory status, the croppers as well as many of the share-tenants, are petty-bourgeois only by aspiration, by the hope of obtaining land and becoming a petty-proprietor, a hope which is fast losing reality in these days of decadent capitalism, but which is nevertheless a powerful force in setting the rural masses onto the path of revolutionary action.

The predominance of semi-feudal forms of labor and relationships in the cotton belt has not meant the total absence of Negro landowners nor of capitalist relations of production. Accompanying the penetration of capitalism into Black Belt agrarian economy, there has been a growing army of Negro

farm wage-workers. As we have already noted, the large plantation owners, the great overlords of croppers and tenants, are at the same time employers of wage-labor in Black Belt agriculture. In addition, there are many farms of either landowners or tenants who employ wage-labor exclusively, and another larger group which employs wage-labor occasionally. The following figures sum up the data on the number of wage-workers in the Black Belt and Border Territory in 1930:

	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
	<i>White</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Negro</i>
Black Belt.	76,084	205,422	7,193	87,903
Border Territory.	117,882	90,720	7,546	20,218

These figures probably include a large number of occasional farm laborers, but, nevertheless, they show that the Negro wage-workers constitute an important factor in Black Belt agriculture. The overwhelming majority of the farm laborers in the Black Belt are Negroes, and in the Border Territory almost half are Negroes. The large number of female Negro wage-workers on the land reflects the extremely low economic status of the Negro farm population.

These statistics on farm wage-laborers are to some degree indicative of the extent of capitalist relations of production in the plantation area. The proportionately larger number of wage-laborers in the Border Territory reflect the higher stage reached by capitalist development in its agriculture. But it must be remembered that the Negro farm laborers, especially in the Black Belt and on the plantations, are hampered and restricted by the semi-feudal conditions which prevail. This is expressed in the form of prevailing low wages, the lowest for farm labor in the country, strict supervision by plantation foremen, long hours of labor ("from sun-up to sun-down") and the subjection to the harsh overlordship generally which prevail in these regions. But the penetration of capitalist forms of labor into the plantation economy has produced as a necessary by-product an army of Negro wage workers on the land who, because of their contact with the workers in the towns and cities and because of their class position, are bound to play a leading role in the development of an agrarian and labor movement in the Black Belt.

Machinery and the Plantation

It has been widely believed among economists and students of the subject that machine production in cotton culture will in itself lead to the eventual disappearance of the plantation system. This expectation was given new life with each technical advance in cotton. But the row-type tractor and other pre-picking machines developed over the last fifty years have proved to be the boon only of the western cotton areas, where the capitalist organization of production permitted use of the machine. The old cotton areas persisted in their old methods and resisted stubbornly every new technical advance.

But should a cheap and effective mechanical cotton picker be perfected, it is claimed, the plantation system in its present form would disappear. It has been widely assumed that the perfection of such a machine would result in its immediate utilization, followed by a transformation in the plantation economy, *i.e.*, by wage-labor displacing cropper and tenant labor. The mechanization of the cotton harvest is expected to transform the plantation-tenancy economy through (1) the utilization of the picker in the old cotton area itself and (2) indirectly as a result of its widespread use in the Western cotton areas. The following is a typical opinion:

West Texas and Oklahoma with their millions of acres of virgin soil and their large-scale methods of cultivation can produce cotton so cheaply that the older states cannot compete with them. All that is needed to put an end to "ten acres, a nigger and a mule" in the Old South is a mechanical cotton picker. When it is perfected . . . cotton production in Texas will jump unbelievably, prices will fall sharply, and the tenant farmers of the old cotton states will have to go out of business.⁸

The most recent experiment is the Rust Brothers' cotton picker, for which is claimed the desideratum of cheapness and mechanical perfectibility. The Rust experiment has again elicited the old "machine optimism" and predictions are rife that the days of the plantation are numbered. Whether this particular cotton picker meets requirements as a cheap and effective machine is not the point at issue. The pertinent question

is: Given a perfect machine, are there at hand the necessary conditions for its utilization in cotton production?

As far as its utilization in the Old South is concerned, we can dispose of this possibility briefly. The firmly imbedded remnants of slavery have proved to be obdurate obstacles to the use of the machine and the Rust picker will enjoy no better reception. Where the landlord has at hand by far the cheapest-labor supply in the country he will not increase his fixed capital, *i.e.*, his investment in machinery, especially when he no longer faces, as in former years, the threat of a labor shortage. Surplus labor can no longer be absorbed by industry and this plays an important role since an industrial labor shortage always tended to break up semi-feudal land relationships. Even in the past, before the present agrarian crisis, when working capital was more readily available through the credit system, those cotton machines which had proved practicable in the West were almost unknown in the old cotton areas. Figures have already been cited to show the technical backwardness of the plantation economy, even in Mississippi where are situated the most highly organized plantations. There is little reason to expect that the mechanical cotton picker, despite the greatest pressure of competition from more developed areas, will find a place in the plantation-tenancy economy.

But will the utilization of the cotton machine in the western cotton areas force a radical change in the eastern area? We are not so ready to assume that even in Texas and Oklahoma, where the organization of production is best fitted for mechanization, will the picker be as widely utilized as is generally supposed. Those who envision its immediate utilization on a scale which will revolutionize cotton production think they are still living in a period of expanding capitalism when it was possible for the binder and the combine-harvester to transform wheat production. In former years a rapidly expanding market and a scarcity of labor constituted the chief impetus to mechanization in American agriculture. This was facilitated in the North and West by freedom from any semi-feudal restriction on the development of production: free farming offered the natural ground for the unhampered and swift growth of machine production.

To-day there are powerful factors working against the use

of machinery in agriculture generally. Markets have radically contracted in the face of a tremendous growth in productive capacity. In the present extended period of world crisis, from which there is no outcome but a revolutionary one, there can be no question of the wide utilization of new machinery. Naturally, it is still possible to utilize mechanical innovations under capitalism, but neither on the extended scale nor on the ascending line that marked mechanization during the 19th century.

The chronic crisis discourages mechanical innovations. First, large surpluses (the carry-over of American cotton in April 1934 was over 9,000,000 bales) and low prices for farm products lead to a restriction of the area under cultivation. In an effort to overcome the crisis by artificially raising prices the United States government has destroyed farm surpluses and brought about "voluntary" reduction of acreage by paying the farmers bonuses not to produce.* Acreage reduction invites technical retrogression, for obviously there is no constant stimulus to improve yield or use more advanced methods. Secondly, retrogression in agriculture has become a general phenomenon during the crisis. Methods of production have been adjusted to meet low prices for farm commodities: Tractors have been replaced by horse-drawn plows since gasoline is expensive and oats cheap and unmarketable; the use of fertilizers has declined since it does not pay to use them at prevailing low prices; manual labor has taken the place of complicated machines since wages have dropped. The use of agricultural machinery declined drastically in the United States during the period of the crisis. The domestic sale of agricultural machinery fell from \$458,000,000 in 1929 to \$65,000,000 in 1932. These figures signify that during this period there has occurred neither any expansion in machine production nor any general replacement of worn-out machinery. Old machines have merely been withdrawn from production. A temporary improvement, of course, is possible and does take place; but we are living to-day in a period of general decline and not on an ascending curve of prosperity.

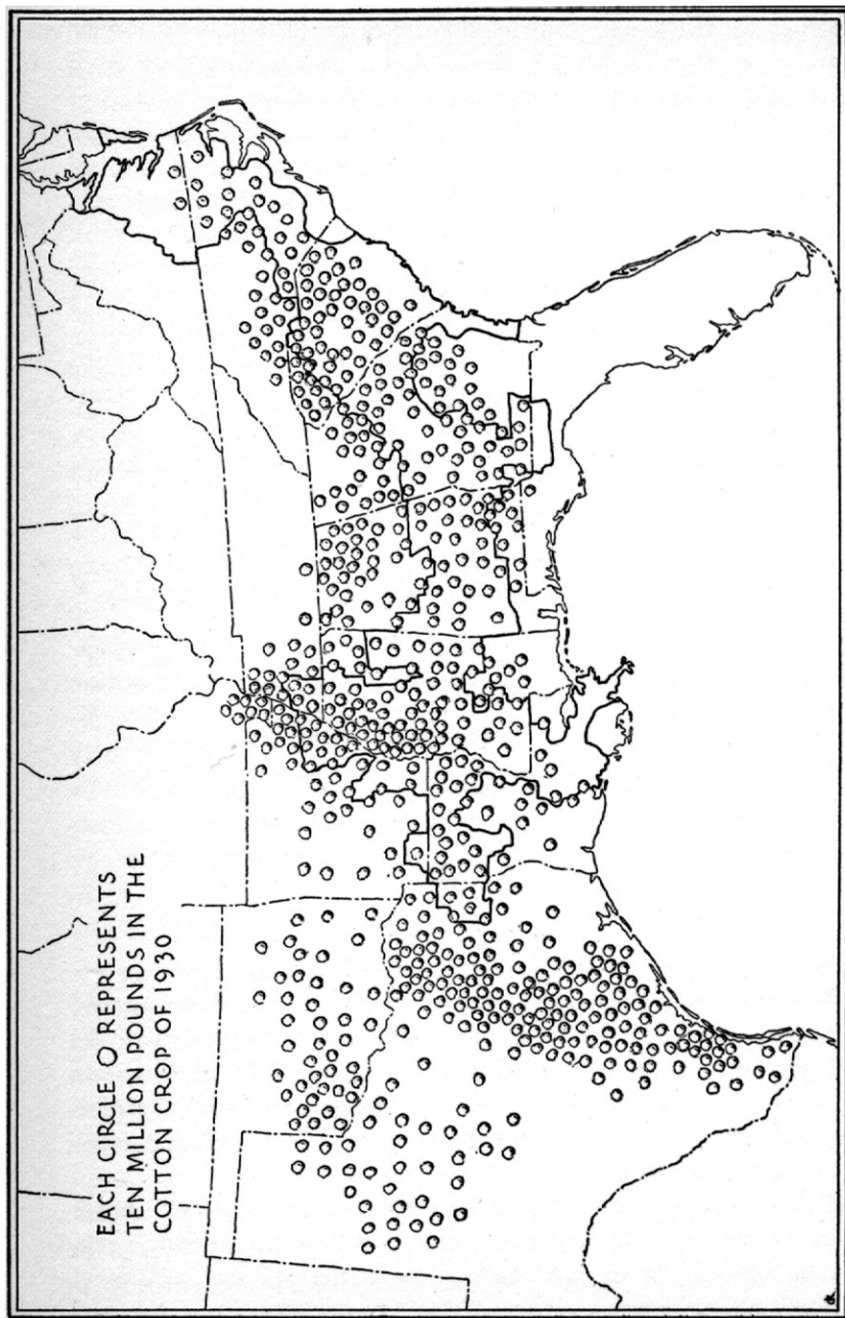
It is technically possible under present circumstances to meet lower prices by reducing production costs through rationaliza-

* These measures are discussed in the next chapter.

tion, *i.e.*, by the use of improved machinery. But it is no longer possible for this to happen on a general scale, but only in a limited way and on a restricted basis. Only the big undertakings have the capital to invest in machinery; the number of middle farmers able to purchase machinery has been drastically reduced by the crisis. The collapse of the credit system renders it impossible for the smaller farmers to acquire the necessary capital. Besides, low wage levels and an abundance of surplus labor make the introduction of new machinery questionable as a business venture even for those who have the capital to invest.

For these reasons, therefore, it is to be expected that the mechanical cotton picker will not be widely utilized. It is claimed for the Rust machine that it will pick 1,000 pounds of cotton every hour as against the average of ten pounds per hour picked by hand and will harvest 3,000 acres of cotton at a cost of \$5,000 as compared with \$16,000 for hand picking. This sounds logical enough, but in actuality its use is illogical in the face of a system which places a premium upon crop destruction and acreage restriction and which no longer emphasizes technical progress. That is the tragedy of this new invention—it is unwanted and cannot be enjoyed under decadent capitalism. Only the large-scale capitalist cotton producers may employ it, but to the extent that it is used it will accentuate the crisis in cotton production by piling up additional surpluses and hastening the expropriation of the petty-producers. If this machine is all that is expected of it (it is still to be tried in practical production) it may achieve wide-scale utilization only in the collectivized agriculture of the Soviet Union.

But, it may be argued, even if the mechanical picker is used only on a restricted scale in western cotton production, it can still radically affect the plantation organization. This is an old argument in new trimmings. For the past fifty years competition has existed between the western cotton fields, organized on a capitalist, more highly mechanized, basis and the semi-feudal cotton regions of the East. Aside from its other effects, has this put the old cotton areas out of business? While the increase in cotton production has been due almost entirely to expansion in the West this has not been accompanied by a loss of production in the East, as is shown by the following figures:



COTTON PRODUCTION IN 1930.
The outline of the 1930 Black Belt is also shown.

THE NEGRO QUESTION

COTTON PRODUCTION IN BALES

	1889	1932
United States	7,472,511	12,709,647
Regions east of Texas	5,964,413	6,725,217
Texas, Oklahoma and other western areas . .	1,508,098	5,984,430

Applying machinery and modern methods of cultivation to a virgin soil, the West was able to experience a great and rapid expansion of cotton production. But this western competition, while creating difficulties for the eastern planter did not put him out of commission. The share of the western areas in the cotton production of the country rose from 20% in 1889 to 48% in 1932, but the eastern areas, comprising the plantation regions, even increased production by 16%.

In fact, the Black Belt still remains the largest producer of cotton. The cotton produced, according to Black Belt and non-Black Belt regions, in 1930, is shown in the following table:*


	Bales	% of Total Production
Black Belt	4,806,858	36.2
Border Territory	2,845,367	21.4
All other areas east of Texas	1,428,970	10.9
Texas (less Black Belt and Border Terri- tory)	2,823,310	} 31.5
Oklahoma	822,400	
Arizona, California, Missouri, New Mexico	533,513	
United States	13,259,413	100.0

The Black Belt (excluding the portion in Texas) grows 55% of the cotton produced in the ten southern cotton states east of Texas; the Border Territory 25%. Despite a marked drop in their production the Black Belts in Georgia and South Carolina in 1930 ginned 1,676,354 bales, the Mississippi Valley (region V) 1,612,724 bales, both together exceeding the Texas non-Black Belt production.

It is useless and misleading to expect new machines under present circumstances to abolish semi-feudal exploitation. True, even a limited use of the mechanical cotton picker will have some effect in increasing the pressure of competition from the

* See Appendix IV.

West upon the old plantation areas. But this will not result by itself in the plantation's "giving up the ghost." Due to its more advanced technical organization, the western area is better able to withstand the economic crisis because it can produce cotton more cheaply than the East. This increases the difficulties of the plantation-tenancy system and results in the more intensive exploitation of the farm worker in the East. In this sense, further rationalization in the West can be said to contribute to the maturing of those forces which will eventually abolish "ten acres, a nigger and a mule." But this modern Abolition can take place only as the result of a profound social upheaval, which cannot be substituted but only accentuated by machine production.

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FINANCING THE PLANTATION

ONE of the most powerful factors making for the preservation and bolstering of the economic survivals of slavery is the system of credit which has become an inseparable and necessary part of southern tenancy. The financing of cotton production as it developed after the Civil War was the chief factor making possible the stabilization of the agrarian economy which had replaced chattel slavery. Much of this service to the new Bourbonism was rendered by northern and, for a time, British capital,* although these shared the honors with a small southern middle class, raised to a new position of power by the bourgeois-democratic revolution of the Civil War period. In fact, it was principally in the role of credit merchant to the planter that the southern middle class developed and was able to amass sufficient wealth to play a restricted role in the industrialization of the South. Banks soon came to play the principal and decisive role in the financing and control of Black Belt agriculture.

Credit and Crop Lien

During slavery the planters were supplied with their needs and their cotton was marketed by cotton factors located in the big cities, North and South. With the bankruptcy of the planters as a result of the Civil War and the shortage of capital in the South, supply merchants, situated in the towns and cities of the cotton belt, began to furnish cotton growers on credit and to market their cotton. The slave system, which had been

* A company, for instance, was established in Atlanta in 1881 with \$2,000,000 of New York and Boston capital which it loaned on farm lands at 7%. It established local agents in 30 counties of Georgia and announced that it would lend 550,000 in each county. Similar companies were established elsewhere in the South. An English company, with headquarters at New Orleans loaned over \$600,000 at 8% during the first year (Henry Grady, "Cotton and Its Kingdom," *Harper's Monthly*, 1881, p. 723).

financed largely by the banking and merchant capitalists of the North, had prevented the growth of a middle class in the South. By the defeat of the slaveowners, the bourgeois revolution opened the way for a more rapid development of a middle class. This phase of the revolution was but one aspect of the opening of the southern market for northern industrialists and the rounding out of the national home market which, translated into political language, had been heralded as "national unity." Remarking upon the "*nouveaux riches*" who were making their entry upon the southern scene at this time, Rupert B. Vance says:

It is very likely that the earliest fortunes to grow up in the South out of the dead level of poverty left by reconstruction were made by men who combined the functions of supply merchant and cotton buyer. Said one observer, "the road to wealth in the South, outside of the cities and apart from manufactures, is merchandising."¹

The struggle over the crop lien laws in the southern states reflects the struggle between this rising merchant class and the landowners for control of production on the plantation. In his book, to which we have already referred, Brooks gives an informative history of the crop lien laws in Georgia. The first crop lien law of the new period, effective in 1866, permitted landlords to have a lien upon the crops of their tenants for all furnishings, and assigned to the factors and merchants the right to a lien on the crops of planter-landlord for provisions and commercial manures. This law recognized the landlord as the direct supervisor and overlord of the tenants, with whom the merchants could not deal directly. In 1873 changes in the law permitted merchants to take crop liens from tenants also, but the following year it was again changed expressly to deprive merchants of the right to take crop liens from any one but landlords. A new act in 1875 practically nullified this provision by permitting landlords to assign their liens for supplies, which meant that the merchants could take them over and enforce them. When the landlord thus assigned his lien for supplies, he usually moved to town and became an absentee landlord, leaving actual supervision over the tenants to the merchant. This had the effect of strengthening cropping and share-tenancy at the

expense of higher forms of tenancy, for the merchant was primarily interested in the supply and credit business. "The small town merchant," says Brooks, "now became a factor in the farming situation. The great cotton factors of the cities were ruined and *the country bank took over the business of supplying the merchants with money.*" (Our emphasis.)

This new act of 1875 was not a decisive victory for the merchant, for only the less powerful landlord would assign his lien. Brooks reports that the majority of landlords refused to assign their liens to merchants, but instead themselves took liens and supplied former wage-workers as croppers, deferring final settlement to the end of the year. The development of the crop lien and the credit system, therefore, played an important role against the use of wage-labor and made possible the widespread introduction of tenancy.

To some extent, the growth of the credit system facilitated for a time the breaking up of the large-scale land holdings, for it permitted small proprietors to buy land by deferring payments and to finance their operations by credit. But this did not last long, and many small farmers and planters were so involved in debt to merchants that a number of landed estates soon passed into the hands of town merchants, who were interested in cotton production principally in their capacity as credit and supply merchants.²

While merchants were at first unwilling to take land as security, the growing indebtedness of their landlord customers often forced them to do so. The middle class townfolk, taking advantage of the bankruptcy of the former Bourbon planters, began to buy up the land for speculation. The price of land went up, taking it out of the reach of the small farmer. Supply merchants were adding to their other numerous functions also the role of capitalist farm tenant, as absentee landowners turned their plantations over to them on long-term leases. "These merchants," says Brooks, "have organized the cotton industry on a scale not hitherto practiced in Georgia. One such merchant operates 22,000 acres, half of which he rents from other owners." On such plantations, the renters were displaced by croppers and share-tenants, and the enterprise run in a highly organized manner. The merchant had a large supply business in the town, employed a resident manager and riders to check

on labor, and forced all tenants to obtain supplies from him. "It has a tendency, however," remarks Brooks, "to dissuade absentees from dividing and selling their lands, and consequently discourages the growth of small ownership. The counties where this form of organization is practiced are steadily becoming blacker in population."³

The plantations were assuming their former dominance. The slave-owner gave way to the usurer-planter, who was directly interested in fostering and strengthening the slave remnants in the form of share-cropping and tenancy. As early as 1881 Henry Grady, the enlightened protagonist of capitalism in the South, could already record:

There is beyond question a sure but gradual rebunching of the small farms into large estates, and a tendency towards the reestablishment of a landowning oligarchy. Here and there through all the cotton states, and almost in every county, are reappearing the planter princes of the old time, still lord of acres though not of slaves.⁴

On the plantations the landlord has retained direct supervision over the production of his tenants by his control of credit. To-day the crop lien laws of all the southern states assure this overlordship to the landlord by protecting him in his lien for rent and advances. In Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida workstock is included legally as a part of the advances. The law thus enables the landlord to lift all livestock even from the share- and other tenants for indebtedness. In Georgia and Florida the lien applies not only to the crops raised by the tenant but against all property possessed by the tenant. In Alabama and Mississippi peonage is fully legalized by laws which provide that an unpaid balance owed by the tenant may be carried over as a new advance for the succeeding year. In a number of states where the cropper is legally classed as a laborer he has no legal title to the crop, and this applies also to all share-tenants in South Carolina and Georgia, where they are legally classed as share-croppers. In the Mississippi Delta, the legal classification of the cropper as a tenant is easily voided by having him waive his title to the crop by special contract with the planter before he is "signed on." All basis for independent credit is thus denied the cropper and the overwhelming bulk of the tenantry, and

they are entirely at the mercy of the landlord for advances and other forms of credit.

Only cash and standing renters have a legal title to all the crop, and in some states share-tenants have such title to a part of the crop. But since the landlord holds a prior lien for rent, and since the tenant may produce little or nothing else above rent, the supply merchant is not likely to make advances directly to these tenants. On the plantation especially, the landlord is the sole source of credit, which he extends either through the plantation commissary, his general store or through a local merchant who supplies the tenants but settles with the landowner. In the latter case the landlord makes the necessary deductions, plus usury interest, from the accounts of his tenants.⁵

Tenants on scattered holdings and small landowners were usually furnished directly by the supply merchant before the crisis of 1929. The rate of interest charged for this form of credit is, of course, extremely exorbitant; the small tenants and farmers are completely at the mercy of the credit merchant. Credit comes to the croppers, tenants and small owners second hand, for both the large landowners and the merchants obtain their credit from the banks at interest rates of about 8.5%. The small producer pays at least 25% for this credit.⁶ Prof. Calvin B. Hoover in his independent study of the effects in the South of the crop reduction program of the AAA, made in 1934 at the request of the Secretary of Agriculture, reported that the tenant is usually charged a nominal interest rate of 10% plus an additional service charge of 10% upon all advances. If these advances are repaid when the cotton is ginned the actual rate is much higher, since the term of the loan is much less than a year.⁷

The credit system as it functions in the South not only continually pumps new blood into the survivals of slavery but is a powerful factor retarding the technical and rational development of agriculture in the South. The preservation of outmoded forms of labor and semi-feudal relations, as well as the influence of the credit institutions in retarding the use of wage-labor, militate against the scientific and rational development of cultivation. But in addition to this, those who control credit in the South have played an aggressive and dominant role in actually preventing the development of scientific cultivation. In the

cotton belt the credit institutions accept only cotton as collateral security and will extend credit only to those whose major crop is cotton, for its complete failure is improbable and it has a ready market when not restricted by a crisis of overproduction. They therefore discourage production of other crops. In addition, the raising of foodstuffs has been particularly discouraged since it frees the farmer from the necessity of obtaining food on credit, and thus deprives the merchant and plantation owner, who grows his food for rationing on his own land, of a lucrative business. The avenue towards diversification, which has been the forlorn hope of all those who were aware of the continual destruction of the soil as the result of the planting of the single crop and who are vainly seeking a way out of the ruin arising from the dependence upon a chaotic cotton market, is blocked by the credit institutions of the South. Bourgeois writers have sought to blame the retrogression of southern agriculture upon the "ignorant" Negro tenants, but the responsibility rests squarely upon the financial kings of cotton. Tremendous wealth, in the form of soil deterioration, has been persistently and stubbornly destroyed and this form of continual destruction of wealth is more harmful than the wanton destruction of crops indulged in by capitalism during the present crisis.

Role of the Banks

The whole credit structure in the South is maintained by finance capital. Banks have played the pivotal role in financing, bolstering and prolonging the semi-feudal structure of Black Belt economy. This is how Vance described the role of the local banks before the federal government practically took over their function under the Roosevelt administration:

The merchant and the planter must also be financed. . . . It is safe to say that most plantation owners preparing to plant a crop now go to see their bankers. After a conference covering details of amount of acreage, number of plows, cost and production, the planter is given a line of credit secured by personal note. The loans are to be issued according to seasonal needs; so much for furnishing, planting, chopping and picking. The supply stores are granted credit by wholesale houses. This, however, is considered precarious business since the

failures of 1914, 1921 and 1926, Accordingly, many supply merchants now borrow from banks to pay off their thirty-day bills with the wholesaler.⁸

Hubbard, member of a leading firm of cotton brokers, who is certainly in a position to know, describes the role of the country banks as follows:

. . . They provide a link between the farmer and small merchant and the larger financial centers. These banks all have correspondents in the large cities, not alone in the South, but in the North as well. Through these channels filter down one way the financial opinions of the large cities and large banks, and up the other way, the views of the interior upon the state of trade and the conditions of the crop.

To the country bank come all classes of farmers and merchants, from the small renter to the large planter, and from the small county merchant to the interior shipper, engaged in moving the cotton to the mills either at home or abroad.

The small farmer and the smaller country merchant will do all their business with the country bank. The larger men, of course, do business elsewhere also, since the resources of the interior banks will not suffice for their needs. The crop notes, originally discounted by the country bank, will be found in the loan portfolios of the larger institutions of the cities, as the money to make and move the crop is sent out through the usual banking channels.

The country banker has great influence on the farming communities for it is to him the farmer goes in the spring for funds and for advice. Even if the farmer is being financed by the country merchant, the result is the same, for the latter is doing business with the bank. It may be surmised that the country banks can exercise much influence upon the acreage in the spring and upon the marketing in the fall. It is the refusal of the country bank to advance additional funds with unpaid paper still on their books which has much to do with the curtailment of acreage in a year of stress, such as the spring of 1921. . . . Similarly in the fall they can exercise considerable influence upon the marketing of the crop.⁹

The small country banks, of course, do not play an independent role. They simply act as local agents for the larger financial institutions, and are the arms of finance capital reaching into the hinterland of the country. It is through the country banks that finance capital has fastened its control over cotton

production and marketing, and it is through them that it has maintained the plantations and the whole tenant structure of southern agrarian economy. Just as finance capital in its exploitation of the colonies has sought support from and granted support in return to the reactionary, retrogressive, backward classes, and the social institutions which maintain them, it has entered upon the same kind of alliance in the South with the large plantation owners and the overlords of the tenantry. It is the chief beneficiary of the surplus profits obtained from the semi-slave labor on the cotton plantations, which produces a crop second in value among all crops in the United States, and first in value of all exported agricultural products. Finance capital, through its control of credit, appropriates to itself the great bulk of the returns from the vast semi-feudal domain in the South. It has accepted as its basis in southern agriculture, nourished and thrived upon the economic survivals of slavery.

Government as Financier

In the South, more than in any other section of the country, the Federal government has participated directly in the economic functions of finance capital. Even before the Roosevelt administration became a large-scale farm mortgagee, the Federal land banks* were the largest holder of farm mortgages in the South. On January 1, 1928, 21.7% of the farm mortgages in the South Atlantic states, 34.5% in the East South Central states and 23.7% in the West South Central states were held by the Federal land banks as compared with 12.1% for the United States as a whole. The next largest holders of farm mortgages in the South were the insurance companies who held 12.5% in the South Atlantic states, 28.0% in the East South Atlantic states, and 25% in the West South Atlantic states as compared with 22.9% for the country as a whole, where they were the largest holders of farm mortgages.¹⁰

The crisis rapidly increased the direct financial stake of the Federal government in southern agriculture. The chief consideration of the government during the crisis was to prevent the collapse of large financial institutions. The policy of the Hoover

* In 1933, the United States government owned 64.2% of the total capital stock of the Federal land banks, and national farm loan associations, operating under the supervision of and with funds made available by the Farm Credit Administration, owned 35.2%.

administration was to advance large sums of public funds to the large concerns in difficulty, chiefly through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Only when the failure of many local banks in the farm area, combined with the presence of large surplus stocks of farm produce and low commodity prices for farm products, threatened seriously to deplete the resources of the insurance companies and the large banks holding farm mortgages, did the government allocate funds for direct loans to farmers. The Regional Agricultural Credit Corporation, organized by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, was the result of pressure brought to bear upon the Federal government chiefly by the large stockbreeders and the large cotton growers of the plantation area. Credit in the South was practically dried up by the failure of the banks and credit merchants, and the remaining banks refused to extend further credit with large debts still outstanding and no prospects for a higher price of cotton which would assure them collection of interest and principal on further loans. The Regional Agricultural Credit Corporation to a large degree replaced the banks in advancing credit and, like them, served the larger-scale producers, which in the South means principally the plantation owners. Credit from this source was closed to the small tenant farmers in advance by the provision that a waiver of the landlord's lien must be obtained before a loan is even considered. The average loan was \$1,000 and its collateral requirements so heavy that they could not possibly be met by the small farmers.

Second-hand credit to the small cotton producers had been virtually cut off by the failure of the supply merchants or the inability of the latter to obtain credit from banks. Practically the only source of credit remaining for the small farmers were the limited Federal feed and crop loans, advanced by the Department of Agriculture. The maximum loan was \$250, but since the security required was a first lien on the crops or on livestock (which in the case of the tenant is already held by the landlord), or a first mortgage on personal property, this form of credit was closed to the small tenant, and even the small owner-operator who was already heavily in debt. Although the loan was limited to \$250 for any single farmer, the tenants on a single plantation could obtain as high as \$2,000; the plantation owners probably managed to grab a good slice of the feed and

crop loans by the mere technicality of waiving their first liens on the tenants' crops. Arthur Raper, of the Commission on Interracial Relations, reported in the spring of 1933 that in the Georgia Black Belt "the planters usually got control of their tenants' checks through a verbal agreement between the landlord and the tenant." By refusing to waive his lien on the rent, one of the requirements of the loan, Mr. Raper explains, "the landlord virtually forced the tenant to deliver the check to him."

Due to the absence of short-term credit facilities for the small producers, many of them had already been forced out of cotton production before the Roosevelt farm plan was to accelerate this tendency. The increase in diversification of crops and the planting of food crops in the South, which have been reported lately with predictions that this spells the end of the evils of single cash-crop farming, have probably occurred among the small farm owners who had to curtail cotton production for lack of credit or on the large plantations where the failure of supply merchants have forced the planter to grow a larger share of the furnishings for his tenants.

The preservation of the flow of credit into the South is the pivotal point in maintaining the normal functioning of the plantation. The Hoover administration directed the main bulk of its emergency funds for agricultural credit to the cotton states. An analysis of government short-term credits for farmers between 1929 and 1933 shows that 46% of the total \$225,000,000 went to eight southern states, which include the principal cotton areas.* In the states in question, this meant primarily a bolstering of the plantation economy.

The operations of the Agricultural Marketing Act Revolving Fund (set up to facilitate marketing by large growers and merchants and whose function is now being taken over by the Central Bank for Cooperatives) reflect the same concern of the Federal government with regard to cotton economy. The gross commitments of the Fund to cotton cooperatives** from July,

* Loans issued through the Crop Production and Seed Loan offices, 1929-1933, and the crop production loans issued through the Federal intermediate credit banks. Based upon a table prepared by the Firm Research Inc.

** There were 274 cotton and cotton products selling and buying associations during the 1932-33 marketing season, with a membership of about 200,000, including shippers, consigners and others concerned exclusively with marketing.

1929, to May, 1933, were \$271,000,000 as compared with \$76,000,000 to the grain cooperatives, the next largest commitments.¹¹ The benefits of this fund accrued only to the large growers and cotton commission houses. Another undertaking of the Hoover administration was the Cotton Stabilization Corporation organized in 1929 by the Federal Farm Board, which attempted to peg prices of cotton by holding large stocks off the market. For this purpose, which if successful could be of help only to the large grower and cotton merchant who had large stocks on hand and could afford to wait for higher prices, \$166,000,000 was obtained from the Agricultural Marketing Act Revolving Fund.¹²

The measures undertaken by the Hoover administration to meet the effects of the crisis in southern agriculture have, in reality, concentrated upon preserving and bolstering the credit apparatus of finance capital and, along with it, the plantation and tenant system. These measures were but a more direct and strenuous application of policies which were inherent in the situation which developed since the Civil War and expressed the intimate bonds between finance capital and the plantation economy.

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration

But it remained for the Roosevelt administration to impress the stamp of the Federal government even more deeply upon the semi-slavery of the South. A crisis always accentuates all the inherent contradictions and weaknesses of capitalism, rouses from its depths all those contending forces in whose eventual clash the fate of capitalism will finally be settled, and bares those vital issues which are growing into the maturity of revolution. It is then that the policies pursued by the ruling class most clearly reveal the basic processes of capitalist society. The National Recovery Administration had not been wanting in this respect: it had immeasurably hastened all monopoly tendencies in those branches of the national economy which had not already been entirely monopolized and exerted all its resources to maintain and support the existing monopolies at the expense, of course, of the workers and small producers. The "New Deal" in southern cotton merely placed new emphasis upon and extended the policies already instituted by the Hoover

regime. There was a gaudy demagogic dress, but the content remained the same. Instead of pumping funds directly into the financial institutions at the top, as Hoover had done, Roosevelt used public funds to create new credit institutions which did not have the onus of the old ones and were capped with the eagle of the Federal government: but the pipe lines all emptied into the coffers of finance capital.

The methods employed were chiefly two: a forced cut in farm production and the taking over by the Federal government of practically all credit operations in agriculture. The intention was to utilize the government control of credit for the purpose of forcing acreage reduction.

In January 1936, after the Agricultural Adjustment Act had been in operation for over two years, the Supreme Court declared the AAA unconstitutional on the ground that it violated States' rights by attempting to regulate farm production. It is not our intention to discuss the reactionary character of this decision or its political implications. But it is important to note that the Court's ruling left the new farm credit institutions untouched. And the most important thing is that the credit institutions at present functioning are being rapidly centralized at Washington, facilitating the more thorough and efficient fleecing of the small producers for the benefit of big capital.

The acreage and crop reduction measures undertaken by the government were in reality emergency measures to save the farm creditors and, with them, the large-scale farm enterprises. The situation in the summer of 1933 called for drastic action: a bumper crop of cotton was ripening on the fields; there were cotton stocks on hand equal to a year's production; there was no prospect of any improvement in the world market; if this crop were permitted to find its way to market the bottom would fall out of cotton prices. Ten million acres of ripening cotton were plowed under, destroying a possible four-million bales of cotton. Aside from exhibiting the colossal destructive powers developed by capitalism, the real result of this act was not so much in the actual crop reduction as in the flow of funds into the hands of creditors. When the year's crop was in, it turned out that cotton production, despite the plow-under, was even above that of 1932, because only the acres of small yield were denuded and

the crop had been an especially good one generally. But the principal objective of the crop destruction had nevertheless been obtained.

The government had offered payment to the farmers, either in cash or in option on government-owned cotton at six cents a pound plus a bonus amounting to the difference between six cents and the market price which was expected to be around 10 cents. The amount of cotton so optioned was to depend upon the estimated yield of the acreage plowed under. The small farmers had almost all chosen the "straight-cash" plan of payment, since they were being pressed by their creditors and needed ready cash, while the plantation owners and larger-scale growers had chosen the option plan. On the plantations, the landlords had, of course, signed up for their tenants and croppers.

After a first-hand investigation in the cotton belt in the summer of 1933, Webster Powell and Addison T. Cutler (see *Harper's*, February, 1934) revealed what happened to the government checks. When he signed the plow-up contract with the government agent, the farmer had been required to list creditors who held a first mortgage on his crop. Even the holders of second mortgages and liens were able by special arrangement with the farmer or county agent to have themselves listed as creditors of the farmer in question. When the checks came to those farmers who had chosen cash-payment, they found that their creditors appeared on the checks as joint-payees. In the case of the tenants on the plantations the landlord appeared as joint-payee since he held the first lien on the crop; in the case of the small landowner it would probably be the credit merchant or local bank. The government cotton benefit checks were in most cases sent directly to the landlords and absentee owners, or to the banks, insurance companies or government institutions who held claims against the farmer, and who deducted the debt due and turned the balance, if any, over to the original signer of the plow-under contract. "As a result of this," say Powell and Cutler, "many farmers never saw a penny in cash for the good cotton they had plowed under."

On many of the plantations the cropper's cotton was plowed up, and he was forced to work off in some other manner the debt owed for rationing during the planting season. In other cases, the above writers report, especially in the Mississippi Delta, the

planter, after plowing under the cotton on the land assigned to the cropper, simply closed out the account and sent him "down the road." The following remarks by a county agent, who is employed jointly by the state and Federal government, is typical of the attitude towards the croppers:

You know, the government in Washington caused me a little trouble here. By mistake they mailed some of the checks made out to "nigger" croppers. They probably didn't know what they were doing when they did it. Imagine giving a check to a "nigger" cropper! Of course, I turned these checks over to the landlords anyhow. They'll have to get the croppers to endorse them before they take them to the bank. But that won't be hard.

Prof. Hoover in the special study already referred to, had to admit that the landlords obtained a goodly share of the croppers' and tenants' bonus checks by omitting to mention having tenants when signing the plow-up contract or by deducting from the bonus checks, made out to the landlords, all debts due from the tenants and croppers, often at usurious interest rates. "In numberless instances," he says, "if the landlord had deducted the entire sum which he had a legal right to do, there would have been no net amount received by the tenant at all." This depended upon the "charitableness or unscrupulousness" of the landlord, Prof. Hoover comments.

The plow-under campaign, bringing into such sharp relief the direct destruction of wealth by capitalism (4,000,000 bales of cotton), proved to be nothing else but a method of paying off creditors at the expense of the masses of the people. The funds for the benefit payments were to be obtained by a processing tax, which in the long run the consumer has to pay. The only other beneficiaries besides the government and private creditors, were the large-scale operators, who were able to avoid the net by choosing the option plan and who benefited from the easing of the credit situation and the removal of many small competitors.

The option plan and a further inducement by the government worked out splendidly for the large growers and commission houses concerned with domestic marketing. Under the first influences of the plow-under cotton prices rose in the summer

of 1933, when only the plantation owners and the merchants had cotton to sell. But when the 1933 crop was being picked prices again fell to 7½ cents as the small producers rushed their crop to market. Again the Federal government rushed to the aid of the plantation owners and the creditors: it announced that loans would be made to farmers withholding their cotton from the market at the rate of 10 cents a pound for all cotton withheld. The small producer, of course, had to sell at the market price; only the large planter could hold his cotton. He reaped a double benefit—he not only obtained additional easy credit but was rewarded with an additional 20% of the loan and of the value of the government cotton on which he had an option as prices rose to 12 cents a pound.

In September, 1934, the government offered all holders of options an additional two cents a pound if they would authorize the cotton held by the government to be sold to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. It also offered an advance of \$60 per bale to all growers who would agree to cooperate in whatever reduction program was arranged for 1935.¹³

The Roosevelt program for further crop reduction in 1934 was a continuation in a less sensational though more effective form of the plow-under. The government offered a benefit payment of 4½ cents per pound upon the amount of cotton which would have been produced on the acreage withdrawn from production. In addition, a compulsory means of reducing production was provided. The Bankhead Cotton Control Bill, passed by Congress early in 1934 (repealed by Congress February, 1936) set a tax of 50% of the market price on all cotton above 10,000,000 bales produced during the current growing season. On July 1, the government announced that there had been a reduction of 31.4% as compared with the previous year in the acreage planted to cotton, the lowest since 1905. But again the landlord was the chief beneficiary of the cotton contracts, and this time it was not left to chance or charity. According to the terms of the contracts the landlord received from the government 4 cents per pound while the share-cropper and share-tenant received ½ cent per pound on the estimated amount of cotton which would have been yielded by the land withdrawn from production. As Prof. Hoover explains in his study, the landlord received

an average of \$6.96 per acre for the land withdrawn, a sum three times as large as he would have received from his tenant with cotton at 5 cents a pound. The sum allotted the cropper and tenant by the government, as little as it was, we may safely assume found its way into the hands of the landlord.

Under the Bankhead Control Bill the total untaxed baleage was to be allotted in direct ratio to the average production of the various regions during the past five years. Exempt tax certificates were issued to the farmers accordingly. Even Oscar Johnson, owner of a 48,000-acre plantation in the Mississippi Delta and one of the moving spirits of the cotton reduction program, had to admit that under the bill the landlords would see to it that the cotton paid them as rent by the croppers and tenants would be included in the tax-exempt allotment, the surplus being considered as the tenants'. The latter in turn were forced to sell their cotton at any price and on the plantation it was probably taken over by the planter at two or three cents a pound either to be stored for sale under future tax-exempt certificates or sold at a profit even with the high tax.¹⁴ The cropper or tenant would simply be "credited" with less on the landlord's books and his rations cut down accordingly.

Although the tenant was supposed to get a share of the tax-exempt certificates equal to his share of the crop, the plantation owner and the creditor was assured of the lion's share of these certificates by the provision that they may be transferred.

As far as the small operator-owner is concerned, any cut in his production merely brings expropriation all the nearer. On the well-organized plantations it is possible for the planter to produce a much cheaper crop than hitherto, by cutting down on the number of croppers and tenants and reducing rations in accordance with reduced baleage. The plantation owner can profit from the higher prices since he is able to hold large quantities of cotton. The significance of this reduction in crop acreage rests precisely in the fact that it favors the plantation as opposed to the small-scale producers and guarantees the flow of credit into this sector of agriculture.

Acreage reduction has hastened the eviction of croppers and tenants which had already resulted from the cotton plow-under. It has been estimated that 250,000 tenant and cropper families

have been forced to leave the cotton lands for the towns and villages, at a time when there is not only no possibility of finding work in industry but when the landless and unemployable agrarian population is increasing. One AAA official, who investigated conditions in the plantation area west of Memphis, Tenn., early in 1935, reported wholesale evictions of tenant families and characterized the scenes as "like those of refugees in war-time Belgium."¹⁵

For those who remain as croppers, tenants and wage-workers on the plantations, the super-abundance of labor power means a severe onslaught in the form of dwindling advances, lower wages, more intensive exploitation and more strenuous application of all the methods used in "regulating" semi-slave labor. Even more than the plow-under, acreage reduction with its giving of new power to the overlords of the semi-slave economy could only result in an unprecedented sharpening of the antagonisms which are already so sharp in the South.

Acreage reduction as an attempt to peg cotton prices has met other difficulties than those involved in the dissatisfaction of expropriated farmers. It has placed the United States cotton exporters at a disadvantage on the world market, and already during the earlier attempts of the Hoover administration to raise cotton prices objections were heard. Nor is the Roosevelt program meeting with the entire approval of that section of the capitalists who are involved more as exporters than as creditors to the farmers. For instance, W. L. Clayton, head of Anderson, Clayton & Co., the leading spot cotton house in the country, pointed out that the rise in cotton prices was having the effect of reducing America's share on the world cotton market, "until, in the end, we will have surrendered all such foreign outlets, leaving only the American market."¹⁶

In the 1930-1931 season the world consumption of foreign growths exceeded consumption of American cotton for the first time since the Civil War. In 1934, also for the first time since the Civil War, the production of cotton abroad was expected to exceed the American crop by over 4,000,000 bales, due to the acreage reduction in the United States and the impetus given to cotton production in the rest of the world by the prospect of an increased share of the market due to the higher prices for American cotton. The situation grew so alarm-

ing that in March, 1935, the Texas Senate passed a resolution calling for a compact among the cotton states to unite for legislation to restore the world market for American cotton. The resolution pointed out the sharp reduction in cotton exports* and the increase by over five times in the American sale of cotton-ginning machinery to foreign cotton-growing countries. By implication this resolution was directed against the AAA crop reduction program.¹⁷

Loss of world markets is a prospect which may force dropping the price-raising aspects of the Roosevelt farm program. Thus far the interests of the large creditors and the fear for a collapse of the large-scale plantations, which govern the Federal policy, have dictated crop reduction and creditors' relief. But a reduction in markets will bring a new calamity to the whole cotton structure. Either way finance capitalists turn, they are faced with severe contradictions.

The Government Credit Structure

Under the Roosevelt regime, all government farm credit institutions were placed under the control of the Farm Credit Administration, organized in the spring of 1933. Under its auspices the Federal land banks and the Land Bank Commissioner have become almost the sole source of long-term credits to agriculture, as the commercial banks and the insurance companies practically ceased their activities in this field entirely. Short-term credits are now handled by the Production Credit Corporations, set up in each Federal land bank district, which do not lend directly to farmers but whose function it is to organize in turn local credit associations which will obtain their capital from the Federal intermediate credit banks. The government seed and crop loans, which in some measure offered restricted credit to small farmers, are being abandoned. The Federal land and intermediate credit banks will continue to lend only on first and second mortgages on real and personal property. The funds extended through the Production Credit Corporations are being granted only to those farmers who have "adequate collateral," and special pains are being taken not to repeat the "mistake" made in the extension of the feed and crop

* Between August 1, 1934, and March 1, 1935, exports dropped 2,231,000 bales below the corresponding period of the previous year.

loans, many of which remain unpaid. Under these provisions credit is being even more restricted for the small operator-owners.

Of the loans and discounts amounting to \$1,200,000,000 advanced by all the government agencies now under the supervision of the Farm Credit Administration between June 1, 1933, and May 31, 1934, one-fourth were advanced to eight southern states which include the principal cotton-growing areas (Federal land bank districts 3, 5 and 10). The sum advanced to these cotton states is equal to about half of the estimated value of the 1934 cotton crop, although a part of these funds were used to finance other crops as well. But of the total loans and discounts advanced in these states only about \$16,000,000 or 5% were listed as emergency crop loans (feed and crop loans). On the other hand, 55% of the loans were made through the Federal land banks and the Land Bank Commissioner, i.e., principally to the large-scale enterprises and plantations. The medium-sized producers, as well as the large-scale enterprises, could obtain credit also through the other agencies of the Federal government.¹⁸

The greater portion of the loans issued by the Federal land banks and the Land Bank Commissioner were not new funds going into production but simply a matter of paying back the principal on mortgages held by the insurance companies and other private creditors. It was in no sense farm relief: it was Hoover's relief to the big corporations in a new form. Of the Federal land bank loans 85%, and of the Land Bank Commissioner's loans 90% were issued for the purpose of "refinancing indebtedness."¹⁹ In other words, this was simply taking over the mortgages being held by other institutions and easing their burdens. Although this "refinancing" is at the same time supposed to scale down the indebtedness of the farmer, only 18.6% of the Land Bank Commissioner's loans and 5.3% of the Federal land bank loans up to December 1, 1933, involved a scaling down of debts.²⁰

The Federal government is fast becoming the chief mortgagee of agriculture. The Federal land banks and the Land Bank Commissioner together hold 73.2% of the estimated total amount of farm mortgages recorded in the country between October 1, 1933, and September 30, 1934. The insurance com-

panies, hitherto principal holder of mortgages, only held 2.3% of the mortgages recorded.²¹ While the government is pumping funds into the private institutions of finance capital, it itself is taking over the direct functions of those institutions more and more. The government holds the same proportion of the new mortgages in the South as throughout the country. More than ever Washington has a direct stake in maintaining the status quo of the semi-feudal South, and particularly its foundation, the plantation.

The relative position of the plantation economy in southern agriculture is being increasingly bolstered at the expense of the smaller landowning farmers. Using credit as a club and acreage reduction as an auxiliary weapon, the elimination of the small cotton producers is being hastened to the advantage of the plantation.

Expropriation of the smaller landowners of the South had already reached alarming proportions during the first years of the crisis. Out of a total in the United States of 1,019,386 forced sales, mortgage foreclosures and tax sales of farms between March, 1929, and March, 1933, slightly *more than half* occurred in the eleven cotton states.²² Already much of the land in the South, how much is not known, is now being held by the Federal land banks and insurance companies as a result of foreclosures and forced sales. If foreclosures continue at the previous rate, the government will have achieved "nationalization" of a good portion of the land—that is, of the land of the small and medium producers.

Such is the inevitable logic generated by the failure of the bourgeoisie to complete the revolution in the South after the Civil War. From a desertion of the democratic and agrarian demands of the Negro masses, the bourgeoisie could only take the path of firmly establishing and nurturing those survivals of slavery which serve as a basis for the production of one of the most important commercial crops in the country. The Federal government now shares with the finance moguls of Wall Street more than ever the honor of being the supreme exploiter of the South. Caught between "normal" expropriation by finance capital and the power of the plantation owners enhanced by finance capital, the small landowning producers of the South, the "yeomanry" which all good bourgeois democrats

have hailed as the backbone of democracy, is gradually disappearing. The power of the slaveowner, laying low slave and "poor white" alike, is reincarnated on a vaster, more oppressive, more destructive scale.

The extreme importance of cotton in the national economy accounts for the extraordinary measures taken by the Roosevelt administration to preserve this important source of profit for finance capital. Aside from its domestic importance, cotton is so important an export item that one writer remarks: "The favorable balance of foreign trade that this country has enjoyed for several years has been due almost entirely to the cotton crop. If raw cotton is removed from the foreign commerce of the United States, the belief is that the favorable balance of trade will soon stop."²³ Since the beginning of the 19th century cotton has been the most important agricultural product exported by the United States. For years more than one half the crop has been exported. In 1932 cotton exported amounted to 22% of all exports and was valued at \$345,200,000, which exceeded the value of petroleum products, the second largest export, by \$137,000,000. One can readily understand the great concern exhibited by the Washington branch of finance capital with regard to the agrarian system which produces cotton, and which rests with such oppressive heaviness upon the backs of millions of Negro peons.

Some bourgeois writers have seen in the crisis and the measures undertaken to solve it forces working for the diversification of the crops and the growth of "self-sufficing" economy. Liberals writing from the viewpoint of the southern middle class even have seen a blow to the plantation economy in the resultant growth of small peasant, "independent" farming. Others have hailed the eviction of masses of Negro croppers and tenants as nothing more nor less than the liberation of southern agriculture from the retarding and "ignorant" influence of the Negro farmer. These people, of course, are doomed to disappointment. If some of the small landowning farmers may preserve their land, tools and working stock long enough to raise food for home consumption without entering into hopeless debt, this can have no important effect upon the basic characteristics of agrarian economy in the South. In fact, it will simply remove thousands of petty competitors of the plantation

and leave them as a ruin, attempting to scratch a livelihood out of the soil and creating still another anti-plantation and anti-capitalist social mass. Where are evicted croppers and tenants to obtain the land and other instruments of production with which to set up their own little isolated "natural economy"? Very few landowners indeed will feed "superfluous" tillers of the soil out of the kindness of their hearts. The only ones who may diversify more than they have in the past are the plantation owners, on their own farms, and the more well-to-do farmers. Since they were not permitted under the crop reduction plan to grow other cash crops on the acreage taken out of cotton production, they simply grew more of feed and food stocks, if needed, for purposes of rationing their tenants or for home consumption. And what effect can this have upon the basic nature of southern economy, other than to reduce the market of the supply merchants?

All the "evils" of the plantation and tenant system, against which liberal economists have railed for the last half century, have been increased and sharpened, not removed, by the crisis and the way out of the crisis sought by finance capital. The measures undertaken by the capitalists to solve the crisis in cotton production have the tendency of supporting those very slave survivals which make a prison out of the Black Belt.

SOUTHERN INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE BLACK BELT

IN the capitalist countries of Western Europe the growth of the factory system was accompanied by a transformation in the existing agrarian economy. Component aspects of this transformation were the extinction, completely or in part, of the feudal land bonds; the expropriation of large masses of the peasantry as instanced in England by the turning of arable lands into sheep pastures and the usurpation of the common lands from the end of the 15th to the end of the 18th century; the destruction of farm handicrafts and domestic industry. This process created at one and the same time the army of propertyless wage-laborers needed for modern industry and the home market for this industry. The industrialization of the South, however, played the same role only partially and on a very restricted scale.

The revolution of the Civil War period had created for the small white farmers the possibility to acquire land and those democratic rights denied under slavery. The development of industry in the South was accompanied by a break-up of the domestic economy among the self-sufficing peasant farmers of the uplands. The textile industry, the first large-scale industry to develop in the South and the most important to-day, drained the labor supply from the white up-country and closed its doors to the Negroes, as if by pre-arrangement with the overlords of the plantations.

Principle of Industrial Development

The very location of southern industry emphasizes the relationship which has existed between it and the plantation economy. Industry in the South is for the most part concentrated in the Piedmont, whose southern tip rests at Birmingham, Ala-

bama, and the northern at Danville, Virginia. It passes in crescent from Alabama, through Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and into Virginia, forming a transition strip between the mountains and the coastal plain, between the up-country white sections and the Black Belt. Vance calls it a "fringe belt"—"the entering wedge of the North going South."

If, after 1800—says Vance—the South may have been trying to lift itself into industry by its bootstraps, by 1900 the industrialization of the South had become largely a case of capital seeking labor supply. Closely related to the Piedmont's position as a fringe belt of southern resources has been the marginal status of its labor supply. Cheap labor, it must be candidly admitted, has outweighed other factors in developing industry southward. . . . The Piedmont has been in a strategic position to tap the supplies of this marginal labor. In earlier times it drew upon the rural dwellers from the disorganized cotton and tobacco areas. Recently it has drained the highlands of their labor reservoir sustained by a comparatively low level domestic economy. . . . The Negro, kept out of practically all establishments except the coal and iron of Birmingham, has suffered a change in his age-old habits and has suddenly become the most mobile factor on the southern map [migration].¹

Although topography of the territory was a factor, it was the presence of "cheap labor," as Vance "candidly admits," which in the final analysis determined the location of industry in the Piedmont. Furthermore, it was not the presence of "cheap labor" in general, but, more specifically, the presence of "cheap white labor" in the immediate vicinity which sprawled the textile industry over the Piedmont. By 1921 southern textiles surpassed the rest of the country in the volume and by 1925 in value of production. The rapid development of electric power in the South since the World War has made it possible for the textile mills to locate in small towns and villages as well as in the larger cities. Vance observes that "with every encouragement to scatter, it is remarkable that all down the southern tier of states the cotton mills are bunched compactly in the Piedmont crescent. Approximately three-fourths of these mills are in the two Carolinas, and Gaston County [N. C.] boasts as many as a hundred."²

Yet neither proximity to raw materials nor to markets were the decisive factors in sending the industry South or in determining its location there. Our author agrees that the cotton textile industry "is orientated towards labor supply rather than towards markets or raw materials" and he calls labor the decisive factor in the shifting of the industry. The average yearly wage of textile workers in the North and the South certainly bears this out: In 1929 it was \$937 for New England and \$660 for the South.

Dependence upon the supply and "cheapness" of labor power is even more marked in the rayon industry, which has some 35 plants in the Piedmont of Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina. In rayon labor accounts for 45% of production costs.³

Yet, out of 350,000 workers in the textile industry of the South to-day there are only about 20,000 Negro workers, practically all of whom are employed as laborers around the mill and not in the direct productive processes of the industry. And when one speaks of the industrialization of the South, it must be borne in mind that textiles account for the major portion of this industrialization. Subtract textiles and southern "industrialization" would practically disappear with the exception of the Birmingham heavy industrial area: the industries which would remain are those closely connected with agriculture, such as transportation, saw and planing mills, naval stores, cotton ginning and cotton seed oil manufacturing. Of the other scattered industries to be found in the South the most important are tobacco manufacture, centering at Winston-Salem, N. C., and employing about 40,000 workers most of whom are Negroes; and furniture, most of which is located at High Point, N. C., employing about 10,000 workers. In the three leading textile manufacturing states of the South—North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia—the value of the products of the cotton manufacturing industry *alone* (excluding rayon, woollens and other textile products) in 1931 amounted to one-third of the total value of manufactured products. In South Carolina, where Negroes are prohibited by law from working in textile mills where white workers are employed, the value of cotton textile products was almost two-thirds of the total value of the state's manufactures.

If the supply and "cheapness" of labor power were the chief

considerations in shifting the textile industry, as is generally admitted, why then did not the industry seek the even "cheaper" black labor of the plantation area? On the eve of the great industrialization, in 1880, a survey of the cotton mills in South Carolina concluded that a factory with Negro labor could be operated 40% cheaper than a factory with white labor.⁴ Why, then, did not the textile industry recruit Negro labor or move down into the coastal plain where it would have direct access to this labor? The answer to this question provides the underlying principle of industrial development in the South.

The principle of industrial development in the South, as typified especially by textile manufacturing, was to leave the black labor supply of the plantation untouched, to find a solution of the problem of the labor supply which would not need to overcome the restrictions of the semi-feudal agrarian economy upon which cotton production is based. The large number of poverty-stricken white farmers of the uplands offered the necessary labor supply, the tapping of which would not strike at the agrarian economy of the Black Belt. The South presented its "docile and cheap" white labor to the mills, but declared hands off the black labor of the cotton country. The history of the development of the textile industry in the South, as was the case in England, is at the same time largely a story of the shattering of the domestic, self-sufficing economy of the free peasantry, their expropriation, and, finally, their herding into the mills. For the "yeomen" of the mountains this was a direct process: many of the textile workers in the Carolinas were once mountaineers. But the industry also recruited from among the impoverished white cotton farmers of the Piedmont, those whose small economy could not survive the violent gyrations of the world market, usurious interest rates and the competition of the plantations. Many of the textile mills located in the midst of the Piedmont cotton-growing sections, and the impoverished cotton producer had only to step off the land into the mill gate. This is also true of the mining industry of the Virginias and Tennessee, where the self-sufficing mountaineer was forced to sell his land for a song only to be forced to remain there as a miner working on land which had once been his for the lowest wage paid in the industry.

The exclusion of Negroes has become a hallowed principle of the southern textile industry. The Greenville (S. C.) *Piedmont* writes in 1934:

One thing is certain, that while labor and capital may differ, and have their differences in a marked manner, the textile industry will continue to be operated by and for the white race.⁵

Thus, the textile industry developed rapidly in the South without in the least affecting directly either the semi-slave bonds which tied the mass of southern Negroes to the soil or in itself bringing about the creation of a Negro proletariat. This aspect of southern industrialization is entirely overlooked by those who speak glibly about the progressive features of industrialization "in general" and, with their eyes closed to the actual process, fail to see that the major portion of the South's industry has neither proletarianized the Negro peasantry nor de-feudalized the plantation.

If the textile capitalists could afford to follow the "hands-off" warning of the plantation it was due at an earlier period in the North to the seemingly inexhaustible stream of labor from across the seas and later in the South to the presence of a non-plantation labor supply. The plantation could be left to its own pleasures, especially when they proved to be of even greater satisfaction to the financial moguls of the North, as long as industry could find its labor supply elsewhere. During the period when the textile industry, the first-born of the modern factory system, was located for the most part in the North, Europe contributed its expropriated peasants in abundance to the American factory owners, saving capitalism in the United States for the time being the trouble of proletarianizing its own farmers on a large scale, and permitting it to leave the plantation to the tender mercies of the old and new slavemasters. During the period 1850-1880, when the factory system went through its first large-scale expansion, immigration for each decade averaged about two and one-half million. During the decade 1880-1890, years of the creation of large-scale industry and trusts, immigration rose to over 5,000,000. The immigrants manned the rapidly growing industry of the North. Industrial capitalism after the Civil War could therefore get along without the for a time free

labor supply which had been created by the overthrow of chattel slavery, and content itself with a regional division of labor within American economy. The Negro's place in industry had already been preempted; his absorption into the army of workers after the overthrow of chattel slavery would have been a powerful factor militating against the perpetuation of the slave survivals in the South. Instead, on the backs of the millions of immigrant workers the industrialists could enter into peaceful collaboration with the overlords of the plantations. The arrangement was beneficial to the chief participants: the plantations were allotted the sphere of semi-slave labor and the bankers who had direct interests both in the cotton trade and in the textile industry, were assured a cheap and plentiful cotton.

The prime condition for maintaining this advantageous solution of a conflict which had in another form previously led to open warfare was, on the one hand, the maintenance of the flow of immigration, and, on the other, the retardation of the Negroes at a social level corresponding to the semi-slave labor of the plantations. The first was maintained until the outbreak of the World War, when a combination of international circumstances forced northern industry to carry through its first concerted and serious tapping of the Negro labor supply.

One of the expressions of the economic retardation of the Negro people was the relatively late period at which a sizeable Negro industrial proletariat, and alongside of it a Negro bourgeoisie, began to develop. The closing of the textile industry in the South to Negroes was but a method of segregating the Negro to the plantations and pursuits but little removed in economic and social status from a semi-slave economy. The textile industry is now repeating history. The slave plantations had nourished the textile industry of England and New England during the period of its first development; the rapid growth of the mills, in its turn, commercialized the hitherto more or less patriarchal slave system turning it into a "calculated and calculating" system of exploitation. To-day the semi-slave labor of the plantations feeds the world textile industry with an embarrassingly enormous quantity of cheap cotton; the textile industry, now sprawled around the very borders of the plantation country, is in its turn standing guardian over the feudal elements which have survived on the countryside. Referring to the

wage-slavery developed on a large scale in the English textile industry and to chattel slavery in the United States, Marx commented: "Speaking generally, the veiled slavery of the European wage-earners became the pedestal of unqualified slavery in the New World." The same generalization can be applied with equal force to-day to the severely exploited wage-slaves of the southern textile mills and the semi-slavery of Negro labor in the Black Belt

The creation of a home market, in the sense of a native southern market, was not an essential accompaniment of the development of the textile industry in the South. As a matter of fact, the great bulk of the textiles produced by southern mills are finished in the North and marketed from there. An extensive southern market could not be created unless the plantation restrictions were overcome, an obstacle which the industrial capitalists could easily avoid because of the enormous home market existing in the advanced sections of the country.

City and Country

While the dominant principle of southern industrialization is expressed in the most absolute way in the case of the textile industry, it finds confirmation also, although on a less effective scale, in the other branches of industry. In a general sense, this is reflected in the location of large cities. A glance at the map (see p. 17) will show that no new large city has arisen in the Black Belt since Emancipation. The old slave-empire cities—such as New Orleans, Atlanta, Memphis, Richmond, Norfolk, Montgomery, Charleston, Augusta and Savannah—have grown, but New Orleans with its half-million population is the largest. While the lighter industries have developed to some extent in these Black Belt cities, they still remain principally centers of the cotton trade—warehousing, ginning, cotton-seed, shipping centers. The composition of their population shows that in their recent development they have drawn chiefly upon the whites in the surrounding country or in the uplands. Of the total population of the Black Belt only 18% live in cities of over 25,000 inhabitants. Of the total white population of the Black Belt, however, 24% live in cities of over 25,000, as compared with 13% of the Negro population. The Negroes constitute only 35% of the population in these cities, while they

are 54% of the population in the remainder of the Black Belt. These cities are oases of white population and the centers of power in areas of dense Negro population.

In his study of the population movement of Georgia, Woofter has noted the basic peculiarity of urban development in and around the plantation area. Pointing out the relatively larger proportion of whites in the population of the towns and cities, he concludes that:

Just at the point where manufacturing and mercantile enterprises come in and give the town other activities than those of serving the surrounding rural areas, the white element in the population begins to increase much more rapidly than the colored element and the relative number of Negroes to whites does not reflect so nearly the proportion in the surrounding rural areas.⁶

The new cities and towns which have sprung up or grown from mere hamlets with industrialization are located almost exclusively in non-Black territory. Birmingham, Ala.; Charlotte, Durham, Raleigh, N. C.; Greenville and Spartanburg, S. C., are in the border territory. Close to the North Carolina border territory are Greensboro, High Point, Winston-Salem and Asheville. Off the western periphery of the area of Negro majority are Dallas, Fort Worth and Waco, Texas. The development of these industrial towns and cities near the Black Belt has not been without effect in drawing the Negroes from the plantations. Of the total populations of the cities of over 25,000 inhabitants in the Border Territory, 31% are Negroes, almost as high a proportion as in the Black Belt cities, while in the remainder of the Border Territory the percentage of Negroes is only 28%. This would seem to indicate that the growth of the Negro population along the periphery of the Black Belt has been chiefly urban and that it is precisely here where the plantation economy is non-existent or very weak, that the Negro has been permitted freer entry into industry.

The Negro Industrial Proletariat

Despite the peculiarities of the development of the textile industry, capitalist development in the South itself was bound to, and did, create a Negro industrial proletariat, although its

extent and its relative strength has generally been overestimated. The 1930 census reports two and one-half million Negroes ten years of age and over as gainfully employed (excluding farmers and tenants, but including a small number in the professions) in the twelve states where the Black Belt is located. But of the total number of these workers 20% are agricultural wage-workers and 36% are engaged in domestic and personal service. More than half the Negro wage-workers in the South, therefore, are still closely bound either by the semi-slave forms of labor which pertain in southern agriculture or by the isolated and servile circumstances of domestic and personal service, with their corresponding low wage and cultural level. Of the other groups listed by the census, 590,000 or 24% of the Negro wage-earners, are reported in the manufacturing and mechanical industries of the South, and 240,000, or about 10% in transportation and communication.

But it would be highly misleading to consider even the wage-earners listed in the manufacturing and mechanical industries as modern, "free" industrial proletarians, as wage-workers in the usual sense of the word. Fully one-fifth of those listed by the census as in the manufacturing and mechanical industries are in the saw and planing mills, where in the close supervision of workers in camps, in the method of payment by scrip and in the utilization of company commissaries—all of which result in debt slavery and peonage—conditions are not far removed from the semi-feudal exploitation of the plantations. On the other hand, no more than half of those reported in the manufacturing and mechanical industries are factory workers, the unskilled laborers of the various factories, most of them small, scattered throughout the South. With the exception of the heavy industrial center of Birmingham and the large units of the highly monopolized chemical and tobacco industries, these factory workers do not constitute a closely knit and integrated industrial proletariat such as has been created by the textile industry in the South and large-scale industry in other parts of the country. This weakness in the composition of the Negro proletariat in the South is common to the proletariats of all backward regions where modern industry has not transformed the agrarian economy found at hand, and reflects the retarding

forces operating specifically against the Negro people living in the South.

Half of those listed in transportation and communication are employed on the steam railroads, for the most part on the track repair gangs, and one-fifth as laborers in the maintenance of streets, roads and sewers. Thus, while industrialization in its general effects could not help but create a Negro industrial proletariat, the Negro has been practically entirely excluded from the principal branch of industry, has been chiefly employed in those industries in which the forms of labor are determined by the South's agrarian economy, and has been restricted to the most unskilled, the lowest wage jobs in other industries. The entry of the Negro into industry in the South did not necessarily mean an appreciable improvement over his conditions of life on the plantation, and in this, the plantation master was to a certain measure protected against too powerful an attraction upon his own labor supply which would be offered by higher wage levels so close at hand.

Industrialization in the South has not accomplished those feats with respect to the Negro which were hoped for by liberals, namely, the serious weakening of the role played by the plantation in southern economy and the consequent easing of the semi-feudal restrictions upon capitalist development in agriculture. Nor has it brought about the social changes corresponding to these economic transformations—the lightening of the oppression of the Negro people, a swift and thoroughgoing development of a large Negro proletariat and middle class. But in two respects industrialization has changed the dynamics of the Negro question in the South. In the first place, in the creation of a southern Negro proletariat (despite its lack of compactness) and, secondly, in the creation of a white industrial proletariat, whether isolated as in the textile industry, or side by side with the Negroes as in the Birmingham area, industrialization has lent new forces to the liberation struggle of the Negro people which were not, and could not have been, present during the bourgeois revolution of the Civil War period.

Considering retarding influences which have been at work and those limitations which we have pointed out, the Negroes constitute an important part of the southern proletariat. Of

the total number of persons listed as gainfully employed by the 1930 census in the 12 southern states, the Negroes constitute:

- 74% of the workers in domestic and personal service
- 48% of the agricultural wage-workers
- 33% of the forestry and fishing workers
- 31% of the workers in transportation and communication
- 24% of the workers in manufacturing and mechanical industries
- 23% of the workers engaged in the extraction of minerals
- 12% of those in trade, public service and professional service
- 2% of those in clerical occupations

Industrialization has not only produced that class among the Negroes in the South capable of decisive revolutionary action, but has made the Negro an integral and important part of the southern proletariat as a whole. The most important objective condition is present, on the one hand, for the creation of working class solidarity between white and black labor; on the other hand, the development of the white and Negro proletariat gives living embodiment to the essential connection between the struggle of the peasantry as a whole against the remnants of slavery and the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. It is a living guarantee of the link between the two phases of the revolution which is developing in the South. Industrialization has not directly weakened the survivals of slavery, but it has supplied the best force for their destruction.

The only heavy industrial area of the South, in and around Birmingham, is of special significance because of the development there, in close proximity to the Black Belt, of a concentrated body of Negro and white industrial proletarians. In this region there are about 25,000 coal and 7,000 iron miners, and about 28,000 workers engaged in all branches of iron and steel production. About one-half of the miners and one-third of the iron and steel workers are Negroes. The proletariat here is older and has had more experience in the class struggle than any other body of southern workers. The development of the class struggle in the Birmingham region cannot but produce salutary effects upon the white agrarian population, especially in those sections where the Negro croppers and farmers are already organizing and struggling (as in the Black Belt counties to the southeast

of Birmingham where the Sharecroppers Union is strongly entrenched). Birmingham has become the key to unlocking the barriers which have prevented working class solidarity in the deep South and it can be a powerful generating center of the proletarian revolutionary movement. One of the elements of industrialization feared most by the landlord-capitalist rulers of the South, and which they succeeded in avoiding in the textile industry—the creation of a compact white and Negro working class—is asserting itself strenuously in the Birmingham area.

Although isolated from the Negroes, the textile proletariat constitutes a powerful anti-capitalist and anti-feudal force. Fifty-nine per cent of the country's textile workers are in the South; in South Carolina two-thirds of the industrial workers are in textiles, one-half in North Carolina and over one-third in Georgia. A backward mass of mountain and upland farmers, formerly totally isolated from contemporary currents, have been drawn into the modern class struggle. The textile workers of the South come from historically anti-Bourbon sections, and although they have been instilled with race prejudice, still the very conditions under which many of them have been forced off their meager holdings on the land and the severe exploitation in the mills turn these workers into a powerful force making for eventual unity with the Negroes against a common enemy. In proportion as their class-consciousness and political education mature—which to-day is no longer a matter of an extended period: the 1934 general textile strike was an indication of the rapidity with which the southern workers are beginning to develop these qualities—and under the influence of the rising movement among the Negroes in the South, these workers will learn to appreciate the effectiveness of an alliance with the Negro masses in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism.

Despite the advance of industry in the South, southern economy is still essentially bound by the remnants of chattel slavery which constitute that peculiar, distinctive factor characterizing the South and distinguishing it from other sections of the country. Industry in the South did not develop on the ruins of the slave system or its remnants; it developed side by side with them and on the grounds of mutual support. The semi-slavery economy, it might be said, determined the nature and extent of industrialization, determined its location, limits

and the nature of its labor supply. Only as regards the "poor whites" was there a corresponding transformation in the agrarian economy, although this transformation was by no means thoroughgoing, but left rather the agrarian economy of the uplands as a ruin, with its self-sufficing nature and its domestic handicrafts destroyed and with nothing but a small peasant economy of the most impoverished kind to take its place.

Is the South a Colony?

The peculiar characteristics of the South have led certain bourgeois writers, particularly the so-called "regionalists," to characterize the South as a "colonial economy." One of the leading students of the South, and a foremost protagonist of "regionalism," Rupert P. Vance, has most thoroughly developed this view in his book *Human Geography of the South*.

The function of a region in a colonial economy—he says—is to extract staple raw materials from its wealth of soil, forests and minerals, export them to a mother country for fabrication, and then buy them back. . . . A colonial economy is a debtor economy. It begins as an investment on the part of the mother country; it accumulates a little capital of its own; it lacks the organization of credit, and as economic opportunities arise on the frontier, they must be financed from outside the area. The surplus returns are exported as profits and interest to outside business men in command of capital.

The South, according to the same author, exhibits all these traits. Cotton is the great cash and export crop, it has "never paid its debts" nor elevated the region above its original "colonial" "credit basis." For lack of credit the South has turned over the development of her basic resources—forestry, coal, iron, petroleum, and minerals—to Northern interests. Northern machinery manufacturers and commission merchants for the most part financed the South's textile industry; much of Southern industry is financed and controlled by "outside" interests. The accumulation of capital and the utilization of technology have been retarded in the South. Although the coming of industry to the South, the author continues, may be considered as marking "the transition from a colonial to a modern industrial economy,"

exploiting the natural resources and labor supply of a colonial economy." Finally, "the South finds itself in the world economy into whose bottom rungs may be fitted the Chinese and the Hindus."⁷

Mr. Vance's analysis amounts to a petty-bourgeois critique of finance capital. It is true that in southern economy there are many resemblances to a colonial economy. The most important of these is not the "import" of capital and "export" of profits and dividends, since this is a characteristic of practically all regions which are predominantly agrarian in a highly developed capitalist country. The centers of finance capital "export" capital to the farmers and industrialists of the mid-West and West and "import" profits no less than they do in the South. This is a normal function of finance capital within any imperialist country to day and is merely an expression of the close link between monopolized industry and the banks, on the one hand, and the expropriation of small producers both in industry and agriculture, on the other. The territorial vastness of the United States, the concentration of industry and financial centers principally in the East, and the existence of large clearly-defined agrarian areas merely give a regional form to an essential process of highly developed capitalism, which takes place with no less fidelity within the restricted geographic scope of England. Nor does the resemblance to a colonial economy consist in the export of large quantities of raw materials and in the "import" of finished products—this is equally true of any agrarian region within a capitalist country where handicrafts and domestic industries have disappeared or been submerged by large-scale industry. This phenomenon is merely another expression of the dominance of finance capital, of its sway over agriculture, of its milking of the natural resources and labor power of the country. What Vance calls the "debtor economy" of the South is simply due to the fact that finance capital, from its centers in the North, dominates southern economy. And if the native southern businessman has not been able to build his own industry, it is not because he is an oppressed colonial, but simply because he could not compete with the trusts and monopolies, because he fell into the category of small capital as opposed to big business.

Our author, by the way, has his periods mixed. His definition

of a "colonial economy" holds in the main for colonies settled by the mother country during the earlier periods of capitalism such as, for instance, Australia and the colonies of North America at the time of their first period of development. In these cases the existing economic and social forms of life of the natives in the territory settled were simply ignored or destroyed; vast expanses of virgin soil were public property to be claimed by individual settlers and turned into their private means of production; eventually, there developed the chief principle of colonial exploitation in this period—the import of raw materials from the colony by the mother country and the export of manufactured products to the colony, accompanied by the attempt of the mother country to retain control over this commerce and prevent the rise of industry in the colony. The United States remained practically a colony of Britain until after the Civil War in the sense of this export and import relationship and in its being debtor to the mother country. The overthrow of the slave system in the South, as we have already said, destroyed the most favorable roosting ground for British control of the American market.

In the present-day world system of imperialism, the colonies serve as a special source of profit for the more powerful capitalist powers who, by seizure and by war, have divided the colonies among themselves. Those regions which were settled by the mother country and developed during the earlier period have become either independent capitalist countries, like the United States, or developed capitalist countries having the status of dominions, like Canada and Australia. In colonial countries today, properly speaking, the old social and economic forms found at hand by the imperialist powers are simply being utilized by finance capital for the purposes of extracting super-profits. The principal characteristics of pre-imperialist colonization—the extraction of raw materials and the exploitation of the colonial market—have been augmented by the direct exploitation at an extremely low level of native labor, the investment and ownership by foreign capital of the extractive industries, transport and commerce; in some cases the taking over by finance capital of the role of usurer to the existing agrarian economy. Finance capital has not attempted to transport capitalist relations of production to these colonies; it has rather based itself upon the

existing economy, allying itself with the feudalists or patriarchs who rule this economy on the basis of granting them some share of the profits. If industry has developed in these colonies, it has been against the will and interest of the imperialists unless they themselves directly controlled this industry; they have done all in their power to prevent the growth of a native bourgeoisie which would compete with them on the native market and have, in general, retarded the development of manufacturing industries (especially capital goods industries) and other anti-feudal transformations inspired by the penetration of capitalist relations of production into the colonial world.

The chief point of resemblance between southern economy and a present-day colonial economy, entirely overlooked by Vance, is the plantation system with its slave survivals. The bourgeois-democratic revolution still remains uncompleted in the South, and it is this circumstance which accounts for the "colonial status" of southern labor, semi-slave forms of labor on the plantations and in other sectors of the agrarian economy as well as in some branches of industry, the relatively low accumulation of "native" southern capital, and the corresponding dependence upon "outside" capital, the backwardness in agriculture, the lack of a diversified and rounded out industry in the South, and the whole social superstructure corresponding to this economic status. Neither the perpetuation of the plantation nor the growth of industry in the South have been antagonistic to the interests of finance capital. The plantation system, although an excrescence of chattel slavery, has become integrated into the whole structure of capitalism in America, and the social and political expression of this fact is the lack of any basic demarcation between the ruling class of North and South, the identity of their interests, and even the extraordinary measures taken by finance capital to preserve the plantation in the present crisis.

The oppression of the Negro in the United States is intimately connected with this phenomenon; the Negroes are the victims of the economic slave survivals, and where these survivals are the strongest the white toiling masses also suffer from them. The most important social expression of the existence of the plantation is the oppression of the Negroes, an oppression which in many respects is similar to and even more drastic than the

oppression of a colonial people by an imperialist power. These points of resemblance, however, do not make the South a colony of the United States. They merely emphasize the complete economic and social transformation of the South involved in the struggle for Negro freedom.

Another leading bourgeois writer on southern economy, Claudius Murchison, although noting some points of resemblance between the South as a region and the colonies, comes closer to reality with his frank advocacy of extending monopoly capitalism more thoroughly into the South. He points out that much of the recent development in industry is due to the "influx of outside capital." "Outside" interests finance and control all the larger rayon plants; the new tire and tire fabric business is a subsidy of the Goodyear and Goodrich rubber companies; the International Paper Company and other "outside" companies own most of the new paper enterprises; new plants have recently come to the South controlled by the Eastman Kodak Company, the Corning Glass Works, the American Printing Company of Fall River, the Aluminum Company of America, the United States Steel Corporation, and the Continental Can Company. They have all been propelled by the same search for "cheap and docile" labor which located the major part of the textile industry in the South. Even public improvements have practically all been financed by large bond issuances floated by the New York banks.

But Murchison does not lament the coming of big business to the South; he objects primarily to the unbalanced industrial structure built by finance capital in the South. According to him, the seasonal fluctuations in the textile industry can be overcome and the industry stabilized when "the long series of independent processors and dealers has been shortened. The movement towards further integration is already under way and should be encouraged to the utmost." "Integration," can, of course, only mean greater trustification and monopoly. He also laments the fact that "nowhere in the South have banks and the larger business interests been welded into so close a union as is familiar in the eastern and northern central states. . . . The South still awaits from its banks the dynamic power of which they are capable and which they may in the near future come to exercise." Vance's petty-bourgeois critique of finance

capital is here opposed by a frank and open demand for monopoly and the close link between big, monopolized industry and the banks, which are among the principal characteristics of finance capital. The businessman is now "the man of destiny"; the individualistic, *laissez-faire* period of southern industry, according to Murchison, is now over, and the southern "man of destiny" is now becoming a "collectivist," a member of the inner circle of finance capital.⁸

It would seem rather awkward in these days of senile capitalism to envision the rise of a complete, "native" structure of finance capital in the South; that course of development is no longer favored by the fundamental crisis through which capitalist society is passing to-day. But the "man of destiny" Murchison is at least more modern than the liberal Vance, who closes his study of the South by envisioning salvation in the form of a folk renaissance, in the spirit of Victorian England.

NORTHERN INDUSTRY AND THE BLACK BELT

IN the previous chapter we have shown that prior to the World War industry in the North obtained its labor supply from Europe and, as monopoly increased its hold upon agriculture, from the increasing "surplus" farm population. The flow of immigration was one of the principal factors delaying any concerted effort on the part of the northern industrialists to tap the black labor supply of the agrarian South. In the North the transformation of the small farmer into a proletarian did not involve any conflict between industry and the agrarian economy, since the latter existed upon a capitalist foundation. The transformation could take place in a "democratic" way, since the farmer was already a free agent and all that remained was to free him from his land and other means of production. As we have already seen this form of freedom was also possessed by the small white farmer of the South. But any effort to initiate a trek into industry from the plantation country would of necessity have encountered the restrictions of a semi-feudal economy.

If the Negro had been free to move he would have found his way to northern industry at a much earlier date. His virtual imprisonment on the land prevented his transformation into an industrial worker. The presence of other sources of labor supply made it unnecessary for capitalism to attack the semi-feudal basis of southern agriculture in order to release a potential army of industrial workers. To some extent industrial development in the South had already created a loophole through which the Negro peon could escape. But very few indeed joined the rapidly growing army of industrial workers in the North prior to the World War. In the period between the Civil War and 1910, when industry was developing at such a tremendous rate in the

North, there was only a slight trickling of Negroes across the Mason and Dixon line, estimated for the whole period at not more than 200,000.¹

The mass migration of Negroes into the North in the years 1916-1923 was an entirely unprecedented event and productive of profound changes in the class composition of the Negro people. All previous Negro migrations of any importance had been confined to agrarian areas. Prior to the "Pap" Singleton migration of 1879, the migrating Negro population had tended to fill out the newer and more fertile regions of the Black Belt. A movement of this character was the westward migration during the late 'sixties to the cotton lands of Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas, consisting mostly of farm laborers seeking higher wages and better working conditions under the comparative freedom obtaining in the Reconstruction period. The first mass migration to regions outside of the Old South, was the movement in 1879 into Kansas of about 60,000 Negroes, most of whom came from the lower Mississippi Valley. This was an organized "exodus," led by the Colonization Council headed by "Pap" Singleton and Henry Adams, and contained a strong undercurrent of revolt against plantation conditions. Although the Council had recruited 90,000 members for the exodus, and hoped to initiate a mass migration, only the first wave succeeded in reaching the free lands of Kansas.² Sporadic movements, occasioned by local and natural conditions such as crop failures, plant pests, floods, etc., continued into new southern agricultural regions. All of them were small and short-lived: from Alabama into the virgin fields of Arkansas and Texas (1888-1889); from the cotton to the cane lands of Louisiana (1908-1909); to the newer cotton fields of Texas and Oklahoma (1900-1910). But the recently developed cotton culture of the latter states had no pressing need for Negro labor, since the system of tenancy grew out of the break-up of the ranches, and not as in the East on the basis of the former slave plantations. These new cotton regions became primarily areas of white tenancy.

Even as late as 1910 there occurred a movement of Negro population within the more fertile regions of the Black Belt—from the lower Mississippi Valley into the large-scale plantation area of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta.³ None of these movements,

however, involved a serious threat to the plantation system as a whole, although now one and now another sector sustained a loss in their surplus labor supply.

The Great Migration

The migration of the war and post-war period was of an entirely different character. It was the first time anything approaching a mass movement of the peasantry from the Black Belt to the industrial centers had taken place. Although during this period considerable numbers of Negroes moved into southern industrial centers, the main direction of the movement was North. The number of Negroes migrating to the North during this period is variously estimated at between 500,000 and 1,500,000. On the basis of the population figures of 1910 and 1930, the census years encompassing the period of the mass migrations, it is possible to arrive at a more exact estimate. During this period the Black Belt lost a possible Negro population of 1,070,000, while the Negro population in the North gained 1,166,000.* The Border Territory, where most of southern industry is located, had a net gain of 325,529 in its Negro population. Although it was not always the case of Negroes moving directly from the plantation to northern cities, it is apparent that most of the million Negro migrants came from the Black Belt.**

There were those who saw in the migration the actual solution of the Negro question or at least the dawn of a new day which would rapidly follow. As late as 1931, Edwin R. Embree could write in his book, *Brown America*, in relation to the migration and its results: "As time goes on one may expect the race to be more and more evenly distributed throughout the nation." Munroe Work, of Tuskegee Institute, believes that the migration still has in store the idyllic solution of all the problems with which the Negro bourgeois ideologues had been coping since Booker T. Washington.

* The figure for the Black Belt is obtained by computing, on the basis of the rate of increase for the Negro population in the United States between 1910 and 1930, what the population would have been in the Black Belt in 1930 if conditions had been normal. The figure for the North is obtained by subtracting from the Negro population of the North in 1930 the number expected by normal increase other conditions being equal, over 1910. These figures, of course, are only approximate, since the rate of increase differs as between North and South.

** See Chapter I and Appendix II.

It will tend—he writes—to accentuate the breaking up of the plantation system; it will increase the use of machinery in agriculture; it will help to bring about the diversification of farming; it will improve the social life of both whites and Negroes; it will tend to secure better treatment of tenants, white and black; it will secure better educational facilities; labor in the South, both white and black, will become more valuable and will be accorded better treatment; it will help to break up the mass of Negroes.⁴

Indeed, what would it not do! But at this late date, Mr. Work still has to use the future tense.

Woofter envisioned the break-up of the semi-feudal cotton plantation economy: "In fact the Negro migration . . . is enforcing the diversification of agriculture and the introduction of machinery, two of the most needed reforms in the cotton belt system of cultivation."⁵ This has been the battle-cry of reformers in the South since slavery.

It has already been shown in previous chapters that the migration did not result in a serious weakening of the agrarian economy of the South. The plantation remained and share-cropping and tenancy continued to play a dominant role. We have also shown that this persistence of the remnants of slavery was reflected in the continued existence of the Black Belt as an area of Negro majority, and that, in fact, after the migration had already petered out the Negro population of the plantation area resumed its previous rate of increase. But still another question is raised by those who believe in the still unrealized potentialities of the migration. Is it not likely that a similar migration will recur, thus making it possible within the confines of capitalism to destroy gradually the foundations of the plantation economy? If the reasons for the Negro exodus are considered in the light of an analysis of the present stage of capitalism in the United States, a decisive reply to the question is afforded.

The factors giving rise to the mass migration were only transitory and not a permanent feature of capitalism in the United States. It has usually been the custom to attribute the migration to the conditions existing in the South and the revolt of the Negro against these conditions. Low wages, peonage, the tyranny of the large landowners and the credit merchants,

stifling oppression, lynching, social ostracism and lack of educational facilities had been the lot of the Negro masses in the South for decades. Natural factors, such as the boll weevil, short crops and floods, had been present previously. The opening of new cotton lands, in competition with the old worn-out fields of the East, was a process that had continued uninterrupted since the Civil War. All these factors contributed toward giving added impetus to the exodus. It cannot be denied that the revolt of the Negro masses against the conditions prevailing in the South formed a component part of the migration and was an important subjective factor without which the movement could not have developed so rapidly.

However, the prime factor making for the migration was the shortage of labor created in northern industry by the World War. Immigration had ceased when American industry was faced with a tremendous international demand created by the War. With the entry of the United States into the War the demand was increased manifold, while available labor was further decreased by conscription. American capitalism was finally forced to tap the hitherto practically untouched labor reservoir of the plantation country. The first drive for Negro labor took place in 1916-17, the second in 1922-23 when the short cyclical crisis gave way to a rapid boom expansion of new industries. The two principal waves of the migration took place during these periods.

But this movement did not take place of itself. If northern industrialists had been content simply to wait for Negro labor to appear at the northern factory gate, they would have been sadly disappointed. It was necessary to overcome the resistance of the plantation master and southern industry already employing Negroes. There was no floating, unattached army of Negro workers in the South. Labor agencies were accordingly established by northern firms in the South and the recruiting took on the proportions of a well-organized campaign. Labor agents, disguised as salesmen and insurance people to deceive irate employers and landowners, operated in all centers of Negro population and on the countryside. As one observer commented: "Northern railroad authorities, manufacturers and mine operators went in search of laborers."⁶ The Erie Railroad, in the summer of 1916, for instance, "picked up 9,000 Negroes from

Florida, Georgia and Kentucky," while two other large railroads recruited for northern unskilled service 27,000 southern Negroes.⁷ The labor agents found the situation only too ripe for a mass exodus, and they appealed to the sentiment of revolt among the Negro toilers. One agency, for instance, distributed a circular among the workers of the Birmingham area which declared:

Let's go back North where there are no labor troubles, no strikes, no lockouts; large coal, good wages, fair treatment; two weeks pay; good houses; we ship you and your household goods; all colored ministers can go free; will advance you money if necessary; scores of men have written us thanking us for sending them; go now while you have a chance. . . .⁸

Once the southern Negroes had been assured by the experiences of the first contingents that there was industrial employment in the North, the movement gained impetus. The migration, therefore, did not start spontaneously. It was initiated in a strenuous labor-recruiting drive by northern employers who were faced with a shortage of labor.

The migration was the most serious threat sustained by the plantation system since Reconstruction and its potential dangers were great. It threatened to deplete the plantations as well as the semi-agricultural industries of their forced labor. In Georgia alone during the second wave of the migration (1922-23), the United States Department of Labor reported, approximately 13%, or 32,000 of the state's Negro farm laborers moved North. In the course of eight months, 3% of the Negro farm laborers of Southern Carolina and 3½% in Alabama and Arkansas migrated.⁹ Within a period of 90 days more than 12,000 Negroes had left the cotton fields of Mississippi and Arkansas for the industrial centers of the mid-West and an average of 200 were leaving every night from Memphis.¹⁰ Georgia was most seriously depleted of farm labor. Between 1920 and 1923 it was estimated the available labor supply of the state was reduced by two-fifths. In 1923 there were 46,675 farm dwellings vacant in Georgia, 55,524 plows idle and a labor shortage on the farms of 71,000.¹¹

The following indignant editorial in the Macon (Ga.) *Telegraph* expresses the consternation of the plantation master:

Everybody seems to be asleep about what is going on right under our noses—that is, everybody but those farmers who waked up on mornings recently to find every Negro over 21 on their places gone—to Cleveland, to Pittsburgh, to Chicago, to Indianapolis. . . . It was a week following that several Macon employers found good Negroes, men trained in their work . . . had suddenly left and gone to Cleveland.¹²

In the face of the strenuous opposition of the landowners and southern employers, the migration took on the form of a struggle, of a popular movement of revolt. Everything possible was done to halt the exodus: Negroes congregating in the railroad stations were attacked by the police, hundreds were arrested on charges such as loitering and vagrancy; ticket agents were induced to refuse to sell tickets to Negroes; railroad tickets were destroyed; Negroes found near employment agencies were arrested; migrants were herded from trains and jailed; legislation was rushed through placing unusually heavy license fees for labor agents, regulating or entirely prohibiting their activities; agents were arrested and heavily fined for “secretly enticing” Negroes to the North. The City Council of Macon, Ga., for instance, raised the license fee for labor agents to \$25,000, requiring also that the agents be recommended by 10 local ministers, 10 manufacturers and 25 businessmen.¹³ Attempts were made to exclude from the mail northern Negro newspapers which presented glowing pictures of conditions in the North and urged the Negroes to migrate. The propaganda carried in the southern newspapers was reminiscent of the older battle between the slaveowners and the northern capitalists; it raged with criticism of northern industrialism and painted in brilliant colors the paternalism and beauties of southern feudalism.

Faced with a dwindling labor supply, the “paternal” landowners were forced to concede slightly better conditions in an effort to retain their workers. The modern slave master turned progressive; liberalism polluted the air: hide-bound reactionary newspapers were now urging better schools, protection and more privileges for the Negroes. “Owing to the scarcity of labor,” an investigator reports, “one Georgia farmer near Albany this

year laid aside his whip and gun, with which it is reported he has been accustomed to drive his hands, and begged for laborers."¹⁴ But whatever improvement there was lasted only as long as there was a scarcity of labor and old norms were again established as soon as the danger from industry had passed.

The Negro business and professional classes in northern cities engaged actively in the campaign to induce the Negroes to come North, for it meant a broadening and strengthening of their segregated market. The migration was termed "The Great Northern Drive" by the *Chicago Defender*, a leading Negro newspaper which increased its circulation from 10,000 to well over the 100,000 mark during the period of the migration; it spoke in glowing sentiments of a "crusade to the promised land." A conference held in January, 1917, sponsored by the National Urban League which had been organized in 1905 but did not really assume national importance until the migration, passed a resolution placing main emphasis upon encouraging and organizing the migration. It assured the northern employers of the "dependable, loyal, constant American" nature of Negro labor and migrants were instructed "as to the efficiency, regularity and application of workers demanded in the North" and "as to the facilities offered by the Church, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. and other organizations"—but not a word as to the facilities offered by labor unions or as to the need for trade union organization if the new Negro workers were not to hold a position in industry similar to that they held in the South. By urging Negroes to break strikes and even supplying strike-breakers,¹⁵ the National Urban League played a role in laying the basis for discrimination and division among the working class in the North and played into the hands of the reactionary trade union bureaucracy. Instead, the resolution instructed the Negroes about "dress, habits, methods of living, etc."¹⁶

The petty-bourgeois ideologues of the South, however, did everything in their power to stem the migration, for they saw their base vanishing. A Negro leader in Mississippi proposed to the editor of a leading landlord newspaper of the state:

The professional and business Negroes are very much dejected on account of the exodus; and speaking selfishly, they are all but forced away on account of making a living. There is not a Negro who would not prefer to live in the South. If

you can have your suggestions (for fairer treatment of the Negroes) put into execution, it will give us something to work on. We can then call our people together and effectively inveigh against this thing. Confidentially, it is the most unpopular thing any professional or business Negro can do, *i.e.*, say anything against the exodus. For instance, X wrote an article against the exodus and his business has not paid expenses since, I am reliably informed.¹⁷

From their centers in Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes, the Negro leaders called upon their flocks, in the words of Booker T. Washington, "to cast down your buckets where you are." One, speaking at the Hampton Institute Anniversary, found that "the South is a land of hopefulness for the Negro quite the same as for his more favored white brother";¹⁸ R. R. Moton, principal of Tuskegee Institute, appealed to the land hunger of the Negro peasantry, urging them to continue the policy of Booker T. Washington—"getting possession of the land . . . we shall never have a better opportunity than we have to-day."¹⁹ The Tuskegee wing of the Negro petty-bourgeoisie was indeed greatly alarmed that the exodus should have also included Negro landowners, upon whom they had placed all their faith for the future of the Negro. Pointing out that in one year (1921-22) Negro owners in Alabama had abandoned 100,000 acres, Munroe Work stresses "the importance of Negroes endeavoring to retain the hold which they now have on the land."²⁰

In the conflict occasioned by the migration between the northern industrialists and the plantation master there was a vital issue at stake. It was the old conflict in a new form and on a higher level of social development. If the migration were to continue a serious blow would be struck at the plantation economy.

But the conjuncture of factors which made the migration possible were only of a transitory nature. The movement came to an end as soon as the labor market was satiated, all the more speedily because of the active resistance to the migration offered by the plantation master. The immigration law of 1924, which set low quotas, reflected the existence of a plentiful labor reserve which had already been created. The rapid rate of technological advance in industry was not only assuring a sufficient

labor supply even for boom periods such as 1925-29, but was already creating a large permanent army of unemployed. The rapid expropriation of farmers resulting from the post-war agricultural crisis was continually increasing the army of potential wage-workers and neither additional European nor Negro labor was now needed. The factors which had caused the mass exodus from the South were no longer operative.

The unprecedented severity and the chronic character of the economic crisis which broke out in 1929 ought to be sufficient to shatter those illusions about the progressive potentialities of capitalism in the United States with regard to the problems of contemporary society generally, including the Negro question. The expansion of industry is no longer on the order of the day; instead retrenchment and contraction of production is not only the reality but also the program now proposed by capitalism. Under such conditions, there can be no recurrence of factors making another migration possible.

Shortage of labor has long since ceased to be the worry of capitalism. On the contrary, its chief concern to-day, is how to deal with the huge army of unemployed, which in 1933 is estimated to have reached 17,000,000 in the United States. Later we shall discuss the industrial gains made by the Negro toilers as a result of the migration. Here it is necessary to point out that the large proportion of Negro workers in the colossal army of the unemployed shows that the Negroes are being permanently ejected in large numbers from capitalist industry. Among the Negro workers unemployment in some industrial centers is as much as six times as great as among white workers. The National Urban League estimated that 27%, or 1,500,000 of the 5,500,000 Negroes listed as gainfully employed by the census of 1930, were jobless in 1932-33.²¹ In January, 1935, 3,500,000 Negroes were in families receiving relief, or 29% of the Negro population.²²

Back-to-the-Farm Movement

The movement of population back to the land in the years 1930-34 emphasizes the fact that capitalism is fast approaching the end of its economic tether. The cityward migration of rural population, a phenomenon of expanding capitalism, is a thing of the past: to-day the cry of decaying imperialism, no less in

democratic America than in fascist Germany, is agrarianization. When capitalism was hungry for large labor supplies, its culture rang with hosannas to city life; now its agencies of propaganda have discovered many new and hitherto unknown delights of the farm, and even the vegetable patch, in an effort to disperse and decentralize the large army of permanent unemployed.

According to the admittedly conservative estimates of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the persons arriving on farms in 1930 already exceeded the number of persons leaving the farms for the cities. By 1932 the net gain of the farms in the city-farm movement had already exceeded a half million.* This was a complete reversal of the pre-crisis population movement. In the period 1920-29 the number of persons living on farms declined at the average of 145,000 per year; in the three-year period from January 1, 1930, to January 1, 1933, the farm population increased by 2,073,000, reaching the largest ever recorded. The gain in 1932 alone was 1,001,000. The Bureau reports a notable slowing up of the movement of persons urbanward; in 1932 the movement to the cities was only half of the average annual movement between 1920 and 1929. The nature of the migrants also changed: previously the movement to the cities had been comprised principally of young farm people, displaced by machinery and the farm crisis and seeking jobs in the city; in 1932 a considerably larger portion of the migrants were foreclosed or dispossessed farm families.²³

The back-to-the-farm movement is eloquent testimony of the decadence of capitalism,** and reveals its profound contradictions. A large unemployed army in the crisis-struck industrial centers is dangerous; but so is a conglomeration of superfluous, non-productive people on the countryside which for over a decade has been racked with a chronic crisis. The 1933 estimates for the country as a whole show that the back-to-the-farm

* These estimates do not include large numbers of unemployed workers and city poor who have been induced by the Roosevelt Administration to take up "subsistence gardening" on the countryside. They are classified by the Bureau as rural non-farm population and are not considered farmers.

** Dr. T. B. Manny, of the Bureau, reported after a field survey that "many long-unused shacks now in a deplorable condition are being used for homes, the inhabitants endeavoring with meager equipment to grow food among the rocks and stumps." He also tells of the revival of farm handicraft industries in southern mountain areas (U. S. Department of Agriculture, Press Release, April 10, 1933).

movement had slowed up and that again more persons moved to the cities than to the farms. Due to the chronic crisis both in industry and agriculture, a more or less static relation between city and country population is to be expected, with now one and now the other showing slight gains.

But of special importance for our subject, is the fact that the South and especially the cotton states, account for the greater portion of the back-to-the-land movement. In the South in 1932, 670,000 persons migrated farmward and 441,000 turned cityward; the net gains on the southern farms as a result of this movement was 43% of the net gain for the country as a whole.²⁴ There are no figures available for Negroes in these estimates, but there is good reason to believe, in view of the displacement of Negro workers in industry and the special emphasis placed upon inducing the Negro to leave the cities,* that they constitute an important part of the movement back to the farms, and almost exclusively to the Black Belt farms.

How Roosevelt and his spokesmen intend to reconcile their plans for cutting acreage and limiting farm production with their back-to-the-farm propaganda; their "attempts to raise the purchasing power of the masses" with their subsistence gardening and "agrarian-industrial" colony schemes, remains one of the "mysteries" of capitalism. But the back-to-the-farm movement reflects clearly what may be called the "feudal stage" of present-day capitalism, those reactionary and retrogressive processes which have set in and which reach the attainment of perfection in fascism. It knocks the ground from under the feet of all those who saw (and even continue to see to-day) in the mass migration of the War and post-War years anything but a transitory occurrence. The movement of Negroes back to the Black Belt is having the effect of multiplying and intensifying the profound social antagonisms which already exist there. The more the plantation system decays, the greater the antagonisms become, because capitalism is no longer able to absorb

* Thousands of families in New York were induced to purchase cut-rate tickets back to southern farms by the National Urban League (Joseph Mitchell, *New York World-Telegram*, February 22, 1933); city relief administrations in the North, e.g., Newark, New Jersey; Flint, Mich.; and New Haven, Conn., sponsored plans to deport Negro workers to the South. It was proposed in Congress that federal funds be supplied to provide trains to take unemployed Negroes from the northern cities back to the southern farms (Mark Sullivan, *New York Herald-Tribune*, February 4, 1932).

the offshoot of this decay. There can be neither a peaceful dissolution of the plantation economy nor a non-violent solution of the manifold economic and social problems created by it.

The New Negro Proletariat

Although the migration failed to meet the hopeful expectations of reformists, it has had profound results in the subsequent development of the Negro people. The migration itself was, of course, merely a phenomenon evoked by a more fundamental process. The Negro people have experienced the most intensive and important social transformation since the Civil War period. Previously, only very gradually and on an isolated scale, were Negroes involved in the fundamental processes of the capitalist development. But now, during the course of a few years, over a million Negroes found themselves transported from a semi-feudal region into the very heart of highly developed capitalist industry. In 1860 only 13.6% of the Negro population lived in the North. During the course of the next fifty years this proportion had been increased to only 15%, a measure of the painfully slow, practically inoperative, process of involving the Negroes into the orbit of capitalist development. But at the end of the next twenty years, in 1930, over one-fourth (26.1%) of the Negro people was in the North.* No matter that this redistribution of the Negro population had reached its limits even before 1930, that now a reverse re-distribution is even taking place. This shift in population, as temporary and as limited as it was, was accompanied by permanent changes.

The most important of these changes was the creation of a relatively large Negro industrial proletariat in the North. Negro migrants appeared in practically every branch of decisive industry. Over 75% of the Negro population of the North is located in the principal industrial areas; almost 40% lives in the four cities of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit.

The migration has resulted in situating the largest and most basic Negro proletariat in the North. According to the 1930 census, there are over 1,000,000 Negro industrial workers in the northern states, almost double the number in the 12 states in which the Black Belt is situated, although these states contain about 70% of the Negro population of the country. The com-

* See Appendix II, Table 5.

position of the Negro working class in the North is also better suited for the more rapid development of a proletarian revolutionary movement. Of the 1,599,912 Negroes listed by the 1930 census as gainfully employed in the North, 69% are in the manufacturing, mechanical and mining industries, as compared with 25% of the 2,500,000 Negro workers in the South. Only 3% of the Negro workers in the North are agricultural laborers, as compared with 20% in the South.

The Negro workers were located in northern industry to much better advantage than in the South with respect to large-scale and basic industry and were therefore in the more decisive and strategic sections of the proletariat. In the iron and steel industries of the Pittsburgh district (including Youngstown, Ohio) 16,000 Negroes were employed in 1923, and the number of Negro coal miners in this area in 1925 was estimated at 8,000.

The size of the Negro industrial proletariat connected with these industries was therefore greater in the Pittsburgh district than in the Birmingham area, the only heavy industrial center of the South. In addition, a number of new centers of the Negro proletariat appeared in the North, where compact units of Negro industrial workers arose in closest contact with the most strategic sections of the proletariat as a whole. In Chicago there were about 15,000 Negro workers employed in the Pullman shops, over 5,000 in the stockyards, and 6,000 or 7,000 in the food packing plants. In Detroit, about 24,000 Negro workers were employed in the industrial plants of the city up to 1929, most of whom were in the auto industry (the Ford Company alone had 15,000 Negroes in its Detroit plants). In St. Louis and East St. Louis, there were 3,335 Negro workers in 22 iron and steel mills, about half of the workers in the plants of the American Car & Foundry Co. were Negroes, three meatpacking plants alone employed over 2,000 Negro workers. There were about 24,000 Negro coal miners in the West Virginia fields in 1925. Forty per cent of the Negro workers on the railroads before the crisis were in the North.²⁵

In addition to these principal and basic centers of the Negro proletariat in the North, large numbers of Negro workers were also employed in the lighter industries and in construction. About one-fifth of the workers in the steam laundries are Negro women. In the garment trades of New York up to 1929 about

6,000 Negro women were employed and there were as many Negro longshoremen in the city.

While northern employers welcomed Negro workers for a time, it must be remembered that they were welcomed as unskilled and underpaid workers only. If they had appeared in Northern centers merely as unskilled, raw peasants in search of industrial employment, their situation would have been equivalent to that of the immigrant worker. But the shadow of the modern plantation followed them North and served as a basis for all the social, as well as economic, relationships which have developed around the Negro in the North: segregation, social ostracism and discrimination, prejudice. They were received by the employers as members of a people oppressed by American imperialism, suffering from the restrictions of semi-feudalism. Capitalism has given a new base and new life to these survivals of the past, prolonged them in the North as well, by utilizing them to even greater advantage than the national differences among the immigrant workers. Color offered a convenient peg on which to hang lower wages, the worst jobs, prejudice as a weapon with which to prevent working class solidarity.

By bringing Negroes, untutored in the principles of working class solidarity and organization, into jobs which had been struck, by undermining the wage and working standards of the white workers by submitting the Negroes to a lower wage-scale, capitalism provided the spark for such fratricidal warfare as the East St. Louis and Chicago race riots. To this must be added the activities of the National Urban League and similar groups among the Negroes and the attitude of the American Federation of Labor, an outgrowth of the opportunism which infested its policies. It does not fall within the scope of this book to discuss the labor movement as such. But we must point out here that the chauvinism and opportunism in the A. F. of L. arose primarily from the fact that it was based organizationally upon the skilled section of the working class and was almost entirely oblivious to the needs of the overwhelming mass of workers, the unorganized and the unskilled. This attitude on the part of the leaders of the main body of organized labor encouraged and, in part, caused the upsurge of Negro petty bourgeois nationalism, ex-

emplified in the Garvey movement and in the early strike-breaking activities of a number of Negro organizations.

So effective were the barriers erected by capitalism to the economic progress of the Negro, that a decade after the migration into industry, no more than five or ten per cent of the Negro workers can be classed as skilled or semi-skilled labor. On the eve of the economic crisis there was even a decline in the number of Negro mechanics and artisans as compared with 1910.²⁶ The swift pace at which the Negro worker during the present crisis is losing whatever hold he had obtained in industry, reflects the marginal status to which he was forced.

But despite all these forces operating against the growth and organization of the Negro proletariat, the fact that a sizeable proletariat did develop under the more favorable conditions of northern capitalism is of great progressive significance from the point of view of the working class as a whole as well as for the final solution of the Negro question.

The most decisive strata of the Negro proletariat are to-day situated in the North, in close association with the more advanced working class. This is a prerequisite for overcoming white chauvinism in the ranks of the working class and creating class solidarity on the basis of the modern class struggle. It is making possible the beginning of a complete reorientation with regard to the Negro on the part of the workers situated in the main centers of industry. A change in ideology is being hastened by the crisis which is undermining the economic status of the "aristocrats of labor" upon which the old-line A. F. of L. leadership has based its policy of class collaboration. The growth of the Negro working class in the North has also provided the basis for overcoming in the ranks of the advanced, revolutionary section of the workers the bourgeois theories which have hampered a correct revolutionary program for Negro liberation.

These developments have also stimulated the development of the labor and revolutionary movement in the South. The presence of the Negro proletariat in the North brought home sharply the need of carrying on organization in the South and emphasized the close connection between the aims of the proletariat and the liberation struggle of the Negroes. One of the first results of this clearer conception of the nature of the

Negro question on the part of the Communists was the organization of the Party in the South, especially in Birmingham, in the textile regions and in some sections of the rural Black Belt. This proceeded hand in hand with an energetic drive for equal rights in the North and a sharp struggle against white chauvinism in the ranks of the labor movement.

Of special significance is the work that has been done in organizing both white and Negro croppers and tenants. For the first time in the history of the South such Unions have been grounded and have maintained themselves against typical Southern terror. The Share-croppers Union, with its principal strength in the Alabama Black Belt, and the Arkansas Tenant Farmers Union, have been able to lead successful strikes and spread their organizations. These developments, coupled with the growth of trade unionism in the South, are opening up a new reservoir of power for the labor and revolutionary movements.

The migration made possible the growth of working class solidarity and enriched the proletarian content of the struggle for Negro freedom. The southern situation has been brought out of its isolation, especially through such a mass movement which rose to the defense of the Scottsboro boys. The struggle for the rights of Negroes and for their demands has become a central point in the militant sections of the labor movement.

THE NEGRO BOURGEOISIE

THE same forces which have retarded the economic development of the Negro people have also limited the growth of the Negro bourgeoisie and determined its peculiarities.

From the very start, segregation and other oppressive measures restricted the base of the Negro middle class to the Negro community. This placed the strictest limitations upon the development of Negro business enterprise. In the first place, it meant that the rapid development of capitalism in the country as a whole could not impart a direct impetus to the development of a Negro middle class. Secondly, Negro commercial undertakings were restricted to the retarded economic level of the Negro people and could develop only to the extent that an increased base for them was provided by the emergence of Negro landownership and wage-labor. For only to the degree that these developed were possibilities created both for the accumulation of capital and a market.

During the period of chattel slavery there were a number of Negro slaveowners, as well as a tiny professional and small business group among the free Negroes of North and South. Although there were a number of wealthy Negro landowners at that time, chattel slavery prevented the expansion of the Negro market and the growth of the middle class. The Civil War revolution was the first great impetus to the development of the Negro bourgeoisie. To a limited extent, as we have seen, it led to the emergence of a small petty-bourgeoisie on the land and opened the way, at least partially, for the development of wage-labor. During Reconstruction, participation in government and the spoils of office as well as a larger free community favored the expansion of the urban Negro middle class in the South. But the plantation economy continued to be the chief

factor retarding the Negro middle class. The large mass of Negroes on the land did not constitute a free and open market. The plantation and credit masters saw to it that little independent purchasing power was left to the croppers and tenants. Finance capital began to take its toll of expropriation before any important Negro landowning group could consolidate itself.

The migration of the War and post-War years gave new life to the Negro middle class. The creation of a large Negro proletariat in the North enriched the base of the Negro bourgeoisie and tended to shift its principal strength from the South to the North. This base, let us recall, is an impoverished one, determined principally by the marginal status of the Negro workers in industry.

But even this limited market is not isolated from the national or world market, nor is it closed to "outside" business. While Negro business cannot extend beyond the impoverished black ghetto, monopolized large-scale industry and commerce finds no obstacles to complete control of the Negro market. Mushroom Negro enterprises suffer even greater handicaps than small-scale business and production everywhere in the face of the giants of modern industry. By the time of the World War it was already entirely too late for any middle class with restricted capital and a limited market to compete successfully with large-scale undertakings. This was especially the case with regard to industrial enterprises, which require initial capital, a supply of credit and an expanding market if they are to be permitted even a retired and modest existence in an imperialist world.

In the face of limited possibilities for the accumulation of capital, either on the land or in the segregated Negro community, and forced to operate within a restricted market, the Negro middle class could not embark on large-scale production and commerce. As early as 1911, a president of Howard University, a leading Negro institution, in an article entitled "The Higher Education of the Negro," asked impatiently: "Is every Negro to be forever content to remain a hewer of wood and never a drawer of dividends?"¹ This is not merely a rhetorical question: the good doctor aimed too high, for the Negro bourgeoisie never became a noticeable account on the ledgers of

Wall Street. But his query reveals recognition of the fact that the road to industry was definitely closed to his class. The Negro bourgeoisie was never vitally involved in the direct productive processes of industry and found its function only as a parasite living on the body of the segregated Negro community, either in the restricted role of middleman between finance capital and the Negro market, or as an abject exploiter of the prejudices and practices fostered by the ideology of "white superiority."

Manufacturing and Trade

A report of the U. S. Department of Commerce, based upon the 1930 census, places the number of Negro manufacturers throughout the country at 1,500. Most of the Negro-owned establishments are small, some run on a domestic basis and others employing only a handful of workers. More than half are engaged in the production of hair and facial preparations.² The manufacture and distribution of toilet articles, in which the psychology created by chauvinism is taken advantage of, has been the source of some Negro fortunes. Madame C. J. Walker and Mrs. Annie M. Turnbee, for instance, have become wealthy in this way, one by the manufacture and sale of a compound to take the kink out of hair and the other of devices to whiten the skin. But no large-scale industrial production has developed, although attempts were made along this line. Even when small sectors of the Negro bourgeoisie had acquired sufficient capital to embark on industry, these efforts met with disaster because of insufficient reserve capital or credit. During the rapid development of the textile industry in the South, a number of Negro capitalists attempted to start mills of their own. Notable examples were the Coleman Mill at Concord, N. C., with a capitalization of \$100,000, which started up in 1901 but was forced to close in the following year; and the Afro-American Cotton Mill Company of Anniston, Ala., which failed even sooner.³

The largest Negro enterprises which the *Negro Year Book*, 1931-1932, could list in proof of success in manufacturing are:

The People's Ice Cream Company of Pensacola, Fla., employing 28 persons; Southern Candy Company, Spartanburg, S. C., 12 employees; The Heflin Manufacturing Company, Los Angeles, Calif., furniture and toys, capitalized at

\$200,000; an enameling plant at Palmyra, N. J., employing 50 in production and distribution.

Nor does the Negro tradesman play an important role as middleman between industry and the Negro market. This function is taken over principally by the chain and department stores and the large wholesalers. The 1930 census listed a grand total of 25,701 stores operated by Negro proprietors, for the most part mushroom and "peddler" enterprises. The small-scale nature of these businesses is shown by the fact that the stores listed had in 1929 only 12,561 full-time employees, or an average of one employee to two stores. Within the group, of course, there are a number of retail businesses which are relatively large. But all the Negro-owned stores accounted for only one-fifth of one per cent of the total retail business of the United States in 1929, although Negroes constitute over nine per cent of the total population. The effect of migration in shifting the center of gravity of the Negro bourgeoisie to the North is shown in the following: while almost 70% of the Negro retail enterprises are located in 12 southern states, the stores situated in the non-South did more than half of the total retail Negro business.⁴

Negro retailers have succeeded in cornering only a small slice of the Negro market. It has been estimated that the annual expenditure of Negroes for such standard commodities as groceries, clothes and shoes totals \$4,150,000,000.⁵ Yet the *total* volume of business done by Negro retailers in 1929 was only about two per cent of this amount. A study of Negro business in southern cities revealed that about 75% of all grocery purchases of Negro labor families and at least 50% of the trade of business and professional families were going to white stores.⁶ Labor families, of course, provide the overwhelming proportion of the volume of retail trade. The higher percentage of middle class families trading in Negro stores is an outgrowth of bourgeois nationalism ("race pride") which has had most influence in these circles.

In addition to the retail businesses we have just discussed, the 1930 census reports 70,000 personal and semi-professional businesses, such as undertaking establishments, dentists, barbers, hairdressers, etc. But like the retail enterprises, most of these concerns are small, overnight affairs. One investigator discov-

ered that from one-half to two-thirds of the small business establishments listed by the 1920 census, could not be found in 1927.⁷ Of this group of establishments, the largest are the undertakers, to whom the segregation policies of the white concerns in this field and of churches and fraternal organizations have assured the funeral business. This is the only field in which Negro business has practically complete control of the Negro market.*

The largest Negro-operated store in the country is the T. J. Elliott Department Store, at Muskogee, Oklahoma, employing 25 salespeople. The present crisis put an end to the P. & H. Taxi Corporation, the largest single enterprise in Harlem, which operated 250 cabs and employed 750 workers. The same fate was suffered by C. H. James, who did a yearly business of \$250,000 supplying food and other products to coal miners in Kanawha Valley, W. Va.⁸

The free professions have been equally unsuccessful in the large-scale accumulation of capital. The most affluent are probably among the 25,000 Negro clergymen, about whom no detailed financial information is available. The grand total of Negro physicians, lawyers and dentists, as listed by the 1930 census, is 6,781. Prof. Carter G. Woodson concludes his recent study of the Negro professions with the comment that "The rise of Negroes in professions must not be considered altogether an achievement since the Civil War."⁹ The Negro doctor, dentist, and teacher are victims of segregation and discrimination, suffering from inadequate facilities in the way of training and practice, such as hospitals and schools, are excluded from white institutions and, as businessmen, must contend with a restricted and segregated market. Prof. Woodson has made a detailed study of these professions and found that the average net income of the Negro physician is \$2,500 and of the Negro dentist \$2,000, about one-fourth of the income of the whites in the corresponding professions. The average net income of the Negro lawyer is about \$1,500. The median annual salary of about 50,000 elementary Negro school teachers is \$549. Among the higher professions there has been a greater accumulation of

* The 3,000 Negro funeral directors handle 145,000 of the 150,000 average annual deaths among Negroes, and do an annual business of \$18,750,000 (Pittsburgh *Courier*, July 9, 1932).

wealth, especially among physicians some of whom have become wealthy as a result of real estate speculation in segregated sections. Over six per cent of the doctors replying to the questionnaires supplied by Prof. Woodson, reported that they were worth more than \$50,000.

The distribution of Negro professions shows the effect of the migration in shifting the main center of the Negro market. Forty-one per cent of the physicians practice in seven northern states and the District of Columbia, which together have less than 19% of the Negro population. The state of Illinois alone, with a Negro population of 300,000, has more Negro physicians than Alabama, Arkansas and South Carolina with a combined Negro population of 2,000,000. Of all Negro lawyers, 69.8% are in the North, and most of the dentists and musicians are also located in the North. The segregated churches and schools of the South claim the services of the majority of the clergymen and teachers.¹⁰

Real Estate and Finance

The greatest accumulation of wealth among the Negro bourgeoisie has taken place in connection with the most parasitic functions of capital, such as in the insurance, loan, banking and real estate businesses. While the Negro bourgeoisie was prevented from accumulating capital and obtaining a share of the profits at the point of production, a small section has been able to cut out a slice of the profits at the top. According to a report of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, 25 Negroes carry insurance policies of \$25,000 or more. Among the eleven whose insurance ranged between \$100,000 and \$545,000, four are presidents of Negro insurance companies, three are physicians, two are real estate agents, one a banker and one a publisher. Among those whose insurance falls below the \$100,000 and above the \$25,000 mark (the business of two of these is unspecified), seven are professional people, two real estate agents, two contractors and one businessman.¹¹ While this is not an imposing list when compared to the insurance held by white millionaires, and although it is an incomplete one, it does indicate the principal center of Negro wealth. If the professional people are discounted—for their wealth does not arise so much out of their practice as from investment in other fields—these figures

show insurance and real estate as the main source of the profits of the upper strata of the Negro middle class.

The operations of insurance companies, banks and real estate concerns are intertwined. The insurance companies and banks have made their chief investments in urban real estate, since there was but little call upon them for loans for productive purposes. Real estate, prior to the crisis, turned out to be a very profitable business in the Negro ghetto. Fortunes were accumulated by those who got in on the ground floor, especially during the migration when segregated areas were extended in the chief cities of the North. Land prices and rents skyrocketed in these areas. Surrounding themselves with the halo of warring against discrimination, Negro real estate sharks bought up rows of apartment houses on the fringes of the old Negro community and rented or re-sold at high figures. One of the known Negro millionaires is Watt Terry, real estate broker of New York and Brockton, Mass. The story of Harlem, where Negro real estate dealers, churches and other investors turned a good fortune in selling about \$60,000,000 worth of property to Negroes and in extorting high rents in this extremely crowded community, has been repeated in the segregated sections of practically all large cities.¹²

The insurance companies represent the peak of Negro business. They have developed out of old fraternal and loan societies and their growth has been based chiefly upon the differential rates charged against Negroes, when insurance is not entirely refused, by the large insurance corporations. Writing in 1929, Prof. Carter G. Woodson reported 32 Negro insurance companies which had a combined net income of \$2,282,224, a surplus reserve of \$13,281,688, \$316,403,654 worth of insurance in force and employed 10,795 in all their operations.*¹³ of these only nine were situated in the North, although they also operated in the South. The great bulk of the insurance written by Negro companies is in the South where discrimination operates more thoroughly against the acceptance of "Negro risks" by the large white companies.

* At the 1930 meeting of the National Negro Insurance Association, it was reported that 21 companies in the Association had a total insurance in force of \$260,174,467, of which \$169,976,107 was industrial life and \$90,198,360 was ordinary life. The total assets of these companies were \$18,445,798 (*Negro Year Book*, 1931-32, p. 137).

Of these Negro insurance companies, however, only 11 in 1926 could maintain reserves as required by the law and be accepted as "old line" companies. Only two had assets of over \$1,000,000, the largest being the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co. of Durham, N. C., with assets of \$2,750,471. The other, The National Benefit Life Insurance Co. of Washington, D. C., often hailed as the "capstone of Negro business," failed in 1933. When compared with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which at that time claimed over ten billion dollars' worth of insurance in force, the total business done by the Negro companies is indeed insignificant. Harry H. Pace, president of a Negro insurance company, asserts that the amount of Negro life insurance held by the Metropolitan alone is greater than the combined total of all the Negro companies.¹⁴ The small share of this business that has fallen to the lot of the Negro insurance companies is also revealed in the study of the Negro market in southern cities, to which we have already referred. In Nashville, Tenn., 78% of professional, business and semi-skilled, and 96% of the skilled Negroes carrying insurance, insured in companies not owned by Negroes.¹⁵

The banks are the second largest Negro business unit. Even in the best of times they have led a precarious existence. The absence of any large-scale businesses in the Negro communities and the lack of opportunities for investment in productive and business enterprises, have driven Negro banks, once started on a limited capital, to speculative investments. Without sufficient reserve capital and large deposits, they have been unable to withstand for long the uncertainties of speculative investment. A Negro financier listed 88 banks established by Negroes since 1900 of which barely two score remained in 1929.¹⁶ At the beginning of the crisis, according to another source, there were 551 Negro banks with total resources of about \$20,000,000 and with an annual business of about \$75,000,000.¹⁷ Of those existing in 1929 only two—the Binga State Bank and the Douglass National Bank, both of Chicago—had resources of over \$1,000,000 and five over \$500,000.¹⁸ A Negro capitalist has remarked: "There are a hundred white banks in as many first-class cities each of whose assets and liabilities separately are more than the combined total" of the Negro banks. The same

authority points out that no more than 10% of the total deposits of Negroes are placed in Negro banks.¹⁹

Nature of the Negro Bourgeoisie

The crisis played havoc with even the most substantial Negro business enterprises. The Binga State and the Douglass National, the two largest Negro banks, could not escape collapse pulling with them a number of dependent financial institutions. The rise and fall of Anthony Overton, one of the most heralded of the Negro *nouveaux riches*, is symptomatic of the limitations and vain hopes of the Negro bourgeoisie. He accumulated his first capital as the manufacturer and distributor of High Brown toilet products. In time he became, in addition, banker, insurance executive and publisher. His Douglass National Bank came to be the largest of the Negro banks, and his Victory Life Insurance Company had a half million dollars invested in mortgages on Negro homes. His newspaper, the *Chicago Bee*, was among the most aggressive propaganda sheets urging Negroes to patronize Negro businessmen and to "buy only where Negroes are employed." About him, the head of the Rosenwald Fund wrote in 1931:

His businesses are conservative and have the confidence and backing of the financial houses of downtown Chicago. . . . In his business life there is little to distinguish this successful member of the new race from his associates among other Americans. He is conservative, thrifty, and religious. In fact, as all successful American business men are supposed to be, he is a deacon of his church. . . . He gives appropriately but conservatively to the proper charities.²⁰

But the crisis wiped out at one stroke the most serious pretender to the throne of a finance-capitalist among the Negroes. The fate of Anthony Overton epitomizes the fate of the Negro bourgeoisie. Even during the peak of its advance—from the migration to 1929—the Negro bourgeoisie was able to carve out for itself only a small portion of the profits obtained from the exploitation of the Negro masses. So effective are all the oppressive factors operating against an improvement in the economic situation of the Negro people as a whole that at no time was even the upper strata of the Negro bourgeoisie able to es-

establish itself firmly as a direct exploiter of Negro workers on the land and in industry. Only in a parasitic capacity—by taking advantage of segregation in the cities, by turning into a profitable business the effects of “white superiority” ideology, or by feeding upon the limited earnings of the Negro masses through insurance, interest and rents—was a thin layer of big business able to establish itself, only to prove unstable in the face of the crisis.

Nothing more than these facts exposes so thoroughly the dominant Negro middle-class philosophy which has permeated all strata of the people. They show how futile, how bankrupt have been all the hopes for “advancement of the race” reposed in the development of a large Negro bourgeoisie. These hopes which have inspired bourgeois liberalism in this country and the petty-bourgeois Negro ideologues since the Civil War, have been purely utopian and lacking any foundation in economic reality. The development of the Negro bourgeoisie on the land was retarded by the plantation economy; finance capital depleted the small number of Negroes who had succeeded in struggling into landownership. During the period of industrialization in the South and the development of the Negro working class in the North, monopoly capital prevented the development of any large-scale Negro business and manufacturing even within the segregated community. That whole school of thought which envisioned the development of the Negro people along the lines of national development characteristic of the earlier history of the powerful capitalist nations was doomed to bankruptcy. The conditions of free competition and powerful bourgeois movements against feudalism or its remnants and for the creation of a closed national market could not be recreated in the period of monopoly capitalism and imperialism.

Yet, despite—or, one could say, because of—these obstacles, the social philosophy of “race” solidarity, or bourgeois Negro nationalism, has had a strong grip upon the Negro people. The Negro middle class has made its own class aims the center of practically all social and reform programs that have been advanced during the past half century. The impediments placed in the way of middle-class advance has intensified this nationalism and the general environment of chauvinism and persecution has fanned it. The bourgeois programs have had a firm hold

upon the Negro masses because of the relatively late period at which a Negro proletariat appeared, and the even later date at which any sizeable, important class solidarity of white and black labor began to develop.

The absence of any important Negro industrial bourgeoisie is usually cited by nationalists in justification of their program of "race" solidarity. Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, the foremost and clearest exponent of Negro bourgeois nationalism, holds that the petty-bourgeoisie will lead the race to salvation. The petty-bourgeois, he says, "are not the chief or even large investors in Negro labor and therefore exploit it only here and there; and they bear the brunt of color prejudice because they express in word and work the aspirations of all black folk for emancipation. The revolt of any black proletariat could not, therefore, be logically directed against this class, nor could this class join either white capital, white engineers or white workers to strengthen the color bar."²¹

With regard to Dr. DuBois' idealization of the petty-bourgeoisie to the position of the savior of all mankind, we need simply point out that history has amply proven that this class has never and can never play an independent or consistently revolutionary role in the struggle against oppression. It follows either one or the other of the two principal contending forces in modern society—the big bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Sections of the Negro middle class in the United States have at various times done both. To the degree that a Negro proletariat developed and as white labor overcomes the influence of chauvinism and forges solidarity with it, larger sections of the petty-bourgeoisie have tended to support the proletariat. In fact, recent developments along this line, such as widespread support among the Negro masses to a labor-led mass defense in the Scottsboro Case, and the growing influence of class-conscious programs among the Negroes generally, have led Dr. DuBois to develop his defense of nationalism to the full and to take a more outspoken position in the face of the falling prestige of bourgeois programs.

But our chief concern here is with his main argument regarding the "peculiar position" of the Negro upper class. That it has not achieved the distinction of becoming a large-scale industrial exploiter of the Negro workers no one can deny. But

this itself does not mean that its class aims necessarily are in the best interests of the Negro masses. The logic of its own position, in fact, had turned the Negro business and professional strata, as a class, into a force tending to maintain segregation and the attendant social practices. Because of its late arrival upon the scene, where the key positions were already held by the white bourgeoisie, and because of the other factors operating against it, the Negro middle class has been unable to wage a struggle for equal and free opportunities upon the general competitive market. Instead, it has been attempting to nourish and develop for itself the segregated Negro market as best it could within the confines of capitalism.

While it had a great deal to gain from solidarity of white and Negro labor in the way of a general easing of discriminatory practices, the Negro business class also saw a danger in such development. Tendencies towards internationalism threaten to undermine the segregated community and the Negro market. Sections of the Negro bourgeoisie have therefore strenuously opposed all steps towards labor solidarity and their spokesmen have placed special emphasis upon nationalism, always citing in support of their position every act of discrimination against Negroes in the labor movement. The opposition of the Negro bourgeoisie to organized labor arises not from any direct interest in the exploitation of the Negro workers, but from its interests as a parasitic exploiter of the Negro community and its aspirations for the extension of this function. Where the bourgeoisie of other oppressed peoples have been forced into a struggle with the bourgeoisie of the oppressing power for their right to exploit their own masses and develop their own market they have for a time played a progressive role. Such was the case, for instance, with the American colonies, whose merchant and financial class struggling for the right to an independent commerce had to struggle at the same time for political independence. But it is too late for the Negro bourgeoisie to engage in such a struggle against the white imperialist bourgeoisie of the United States and instead it attempts to preserve that social structure which permits it even a restricted existence. It has therefore been even more "Uncle Tom" than Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous character.

The economic weakness of the Negro bourgeoisie is in itself

not a measure of the ideological influence wielded by that class over the Negro masses as a whole. The very growth and existence of a small business class, although most of its members are petty proprietors and struggling professionals, generates bourgeois ideology and aspirations. The petty bourgeoisie has accepted the program of bourgeois advance because its own aspirations drove it in that direction. The struggle of the petty proprietor from day to day is extremely more difficult than that of the upper parasitic layer; he comes more in direct contact with the competition of the small white businessman as well as of the chain stores, hovers continually on the borderline between the petty-bourgeoisie and the proletariat or the declassed and unemployed, suffers more directly from all kinds of expressions of white chauvinism. The petty-bourgeois is therefore the most aggressive carrier of nationalism, which, in his hands, has strong alloys of revolt against social oppression. It was among the petty-bourgeois strata and the masses under their influence that the nationalism of Garvey and other "back to Africa" movements found their chief support.

The Negro bourgeoisie also wields a powerful weapon in the Negro cultural institutions which have become the chief propaganda centers of bourgeois ideology. They have grown to no mean number and must be enumerated as a part of the physical and moral property of the Negro bourgeoisie. Great ideological power is vested in the 28 recognized first-grade Negro colleges and universities, and the 154 schools of junior grade or of secondary and institutional character. There are over 32,000 rural and over 10,000 urban Negro churches whose property was valued at over \$200,000,000. The fraternal organizations of a more or less national scope number about 60, with 2,500,000 members and \$20,000,000 worth of property. There are 144 Negro newspapers, three bi-weekly and one daily, and more than 200 other publications.²² Many of these institutions, of course, do not subscribe entirely to bourgeois ideology and are sometimes vehicles of protest and rebellion against existing conditions.

To the actual economic assets of the Negro bourgeoisie, to the aspirations generated by the lower middle class and to the power of its cultural organs, must be added the support of the imperialist bourgeoisie and its institutions. Although segregation

pervades all phases of social life, it has not placed an ideaproof screen between the Negro people and the dominant capitalist ideology. Finance capital may have a paternal scorn for the Negro upper class, but it does not fail to recognize its worth when it comes to maintaining the basis of Negro exploitation. It has, therefore, been the chief purveyor of illusions among the Negro masses about capitalist advance and reform. Rich white capitalists have given financial support to Negro educational institutions and organizations of the type of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, Tuskegee Institute, etc.

The Negro bourgeoisie is far from being the unsullied and courageous leader that DuBois makes it out to be.

The Crisis of Bourgeois Nationalism

The profound economic crisis accompanied by the expropriation of large sections of the Negro middle class, has produced a crisis, as well, in Negro bourgeois ideology. The petty-bourgeois masses find their greatest hopes extinguished with the crash of the greatest of Negro business enterprises as well as by their own expropriation. It is this which has caused, on the one hand, a resurgence of bourgeois nationalism, and, on the other, a deep penetration of Communist influence in these strata.

The most solid representatives of the imperialist bourgeoisie to-day preach economic retreat, restriction of production, etc. Disillusionment with capitalism as the perfect system is the general keynote. But the program of capitalist advance, of creation of a segregated bourgeois economy, still remains the chief stock-in-trade of the Negro upper-class ideologues. One could perhaps find some justification for Booker T. Washington, the father of modern Negro bourgeois ideology, for preaching hope in a capitalist future at a time when capitalism still had a future. His social philosophy is expressed succinctly in the following: "Wherever I have seen a black man who was succeeding in his business, who was a taxpayer and who possessed intelligence and high character, that individual was treated with the highest respect by the members of the white race. In proportion as we can multiply these examples, North and South, will our problem be solved."²³ If Booker T. Washington at one time dropped out of favor with a section of the Negro middle class it was not

because of his basic precept, but of his accompanying preaching of faithful submission to the social and political practices of "white superiority." There were differences as to proposals and the methods to be pursued in the various programs of the Negro middle class, but all who came after him, even his bourgeois opponents, have submitted to the same basic principle. In practice, Tuskegee Institute, where Booker Washington applied his social philosophy, exposed its fallacies only too clearly: graduates of the Institute, skilled workers and technicians, were most often to be found as bell boys and porters at southern hotels and on the railroads. To-day they are not even granted this reward for a self-lift at Tuskegee.

The chief emphasis has been on the building of Negro business and the winning of the Negro market. In explaining the aims of the National Negro Business League, founded by Washington in 1900, Albon L. Holsey, the League's present executive secretary, again gives concise expression to the kernel precept of Negro bourgeois social thought. "Business," he says, "points the way to a breakdown of the barriers and handicaps which retard Negro progress."²⁴ The Negro insurance executive whose articles we have quoted ends his description of the Negro insurance business with a plea for support by the Negro masses. In return, he promises that "if it receives that support unstintedly within the next five years the race will have a financial reservoir with tremendous powers for good."²⁵ Remarking upon the crash of one of the largest Negro insurance companies during the present economic crisis, the Pittsburgh *Courier*, a leading Negro newspaper, could only repeat the old mechanical formula:

It is an economic tragedy. Extremely unfortunate because of the effect on the minds of the all-too-pessimistic Negro public. If the Negro is to amount to much in this civilization he must have economic power concentrated in such enterprises. There is no other way to economic salvation.²⁶

T. Arnold Hill, of the National Urban League, quotes with marked approval the following utterance of Mr. Holsey:

At this particular time the proper use of our buying power is so closely related to our economic liberation and is such an

important factor in our civic adjustment that it transcends in potential power all our defensive tactics.²⁷

In his recent book, which was a statement of his position with reference to the many programs now in the air, James Weldon Johnson subscribes to the same philosophy:

We have long been saying that we ourselves should raise our economic status by establishing business that would furnish us with the necessary capital and provide employment for our own people. That is a proposition that goes to the root of our trouble.²⁸

Unemployment has offered additional grounds for a strong "race" appeal to the Negro workers. The argument is common that the support of the masses to Negro business would create more jobs and generally increase the economic power at the disposal of the Negro people as a whole. The creation of consumers' cooperatives is urged by George S. Schuyler. The campaign of the National Negro Business League to spread its CMA (Colored Merchants' Association) stores, is accompanied by extensive nationalist propaganda. These stores functioning in a number of cities are privately owned but obtain one or another form of cooperative service from the Association. The announced aim of the CMA is to corner the Negro food market which, it is said, will provide employment for upwards of 300,000 Negro workers. The CMA "if properly used," says a report, "would enable the Negro to direct the enormous spending power into channels which would insure the greatest possible economic benefits to the race." Housewives' Leagues have been organized in a number of cities devoted to the promotion of Negro business.²⁹ Such aims and class aspirations are the source of Negro bourgeois nationalism.

White chauvinism in all phases of American life has always been a constant stream feeding the Negro bourgeois ideologues with arguments for nationalism. The propaganda for "race solidarity" is accompanied, especially of late, with exhortations against the "inborn chauvinism" of the white workers. The nationalism of Dr. DuBois bases its appeal upon the indignation of the Negro masses against persecution and insult and he makes his strongest attack against the white workers. In that excep-

tionally clear article we have already quoted, he asserts that the exploitation of the Negro "comes not from the black capitalistic class but from the white capitalists and equally from the white proletariat." But he goes even further, charging the white workers with causing the "lowest and most fatal degree" of the suffering of Negro labor. "It is white labor," he says, "that deprives him of his right to vote, denies him education, denies him affiliation with trade unions, expels him from decent houses and neighborhoods, and heaps upon him the public insults of open color discrimination." Nor, in his opinion, will white labor change its attitude either before or after a proletarian revolution which, in any case, is not even on the far American horizon. If, perchance, this revolution were to take place, the Soviets "would do no more than exploit colored labor in order to raise the status of whites."

Dr. DuBois' statement essentially exhausts the position taken by all petty-bourgeois Negro nationalism, and is the classic expression of that position. It cannot be denied that white chauvinism has permeated many sections of the working class in this country, any more than it can be denied that bourgeois ideology generally has influenced the ideology of the workers. Nor can it be denied that all acts of persecution against Negroes on the part of white workers have operated towards fanning nationalist separatism among the Negro masses. But white chauvinism is not an instinctive trait implanted in the breasts of the white workers, it is both a condition and a result of capitalist exploitation and the oppression of the Negroes by the capitalists. It remains as long as the society which breeds it remains, and it weakens in proportion to the weakening of capitalism and the growing class maturity of the proletariat. The present crisis, for instance, in undermining the position of the "aristocrats of labor," in hastening the reduction in the number of skilled craft workers, is at the same time removing one of the chief obstacles to the overcoming of white chauvinist practices in the labor movement. The rapid advance which the Communists are making in effecting a complete reorientation in the advanced section of the labor movement with regard to the Negro shows that this white chauvinism among the workers can be overcome by conscious and concerted campaigning against it.

But the Negro bourgeois leaders utilize every one of the ex-

pressions of chauvinism on the part of the white workers as an added argument for their own class aims. Post-War events had already shown and the crisis has proven that the hopes held forth by the bourgeoisie should have died once and for all with the Old Wishing Tree in Harlem. But they are being resurrected and hailed by the Negro bourgeoisie with all the ceremony which marked the dedication of a new Tree of Hope in Harlem at the height of the present crisis.

The insecurity of the Negro middle class resulting from the crisis and the shattering of its expectations for economic improvement are causing significant changes in the loyalty of large sectors of this class. The growth of fascism abroad and its danger in this country have served to emphasize the tendencies towards increased persecution and suppression. It is clear to many that for the Negro especially—far more than for any other sector of the population—the struggle against all fascist trends is a matter of paramount importance. These factors are rapidly creating favorable grounds for the participation of the Negro petty-bourgeois masses and their organizations in a broad united-front movement against such tendencies. The influence of the old bourgeois programs is gradually diminishing. The nationalist movements among the Negroes are tending to emphasize more the fight against social persecution and discrimination and less the general anti-white aspects of the old nationalist movements. Dr. DuBois, it can be expected, will either have to radically change his position or become a pitiful relic of a played-out program. In these times of threatening catastrophe self-preservation demands that the Negro middle class take its position alongside organized labor and all other progressive forces able to stave off fascism and war.

THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

WE have presented the basic data with regard to the Negro question in the United States. This data, which must serve as the foundation of both an analysis and solution of the Negro question, may be summed up as follows:

1. There is a continuous area of Negro majority in the South which first took form under the slave system and which has altered little since chattel slavery.

2. The chief factor which has preserved the area of Negro majority to the present time, in the face of conflicting forces tending to redistribute the Negro population, is the modern plantation system based upon forms of labor which are survivals of chattel slavery.

3. The plantation economy has remained the dominant form of agrarian economy in the Black Belt, despite the growth of capitalist farming in these areas and the admixture of capitalist forms of exploitation on the plantations themselves. The Negro is the chief victim of the plantation, although the semi-slave economy has radiated from the plantation, deeply affecting non-plantation farming and tenancy in these areas and encompassing the lower categories of the white tenantry.

4. The system of credit and usury characteristic of the plantation and tenant systems in the South has prolonged and bolstered these systems and has made finance capital the overlord of the plantation. The measures undertaken by the Roosevelt administration have especially bolstered the plantation economy even at the expense of the small capitalist farmer and especially emphasize the close interrelation between finance capital and the semi-feudal agrarian economy of the South.

5. Industrialization in the South and the migration induced by the pull of northern industry did not bring about a trans-

formation in the South's agrarian economy, *i.e.*, did not remove the economic survivals of chattel slavery. They did, however, result in the creation of an important Negro proletariat in large-scale industry, on the one hand, and a broader base for a Negro bourgeoisie, on the other. Thus conditions were matured, on the eve of the chronic crisis of capitalism, both for working-class solidarity between black and white labor and for bourgeois nationalism among the Negroes.

If we have placed so much emphasis upon the plantation economy and the effects upon it of capitalist development it is because this is the kernel of the Negro question. The influx of large numbers of Negroes into the North during the past two decades and the growth of the Negro urban community in the South has often obscured the essential foundation of the Negro question. These developments have projected new problems to the fore—absent before the World War—and also created a new force in the Negro proletariat whose importance in the solution of the Negro question cannot be understated. But capitalism has indeed given a very limited scope to the economic development of the Negro people upon a modern basis. At this time, when capitalism is in its phase of decline, one can state with absolute certainty that capitalism has exhausted all its potentialities for progressive economic and social development without having accomplished any decisive steps in uprooting the slave survivals embedded in the South. And it has been exactly these survivals which have prevented, within the limits of capitalism, the fuller and unretarded development of the Negro as encompassed in the concept of bourgeois equality.

Some Fallacious Theories

The economic heritage of chattel slavery has given a real and material foundation to the whole social superstructure of oppression of the Negro. If this oppression takes on such violent and all-pervading forms as constant persecution, discrimination in all spheres of life and activity, Jim-Crow as an inviolate institution, lynching, social degradation, etc.—it is because the plantation has kept alive and given content to the most significant social legacy of chattel slavery—the ideology of “white superiority.” Capitalism has also turned this ideology to its own uses in atomizing the working class into races and nationalities.

But if one conceives the agrarian situation in the South to-day as it pertains especially to the Negroes merely as a "shadow of the plantation," as Professor Johnson does, the whole content of the Negro question is obscured. The social attitudes and prejudices which surround the Negro are so persistent and deep-rooted precisely because the plantation is not a shadow, but is very much alive to-day, a real, material phenomenon in the body of American capitalism.

That deep prejudice exists and has itself become one of the integral aspects of the Negro question as it affects both whites and Negroes cannot be denied. But this is merely a social offshoot, a derivative, of the basic economic and social phenomena which has been described in this book. It is not our intention to minimize the importance of this aspect of the problem, especially as it applies to the overcoming of the innumerable difficulties it sets in the way of marshaling the forces for the solution of the Negro question. But any definition of the Negro question which would take race prejudice as its point of departure, or as its very essence, would lead into a maze of blind alleys, or into either outright segregationism or white chauvinism.

This error finds expression in the common conception of the Negro question as one of "race" or "color." This is not the place to enter into a polemic against the "race" theorists *à la* Hitler—even the bourgeois social sciences have pretty completely exposed their fallacies. Biological characteristics are in no sense primary or basic, *i. e.*, they explain exactly nothing about the situation of the American Negro. Their role is purely functional to the economic super-exploitation of the Negro. The fact of skin color, together with the very few biological characteristics which accompany it (all of them facts of no social or cultural significance in themselves), have been used to delimit and set apart a whole section of the American population as a socially outcast nation, subject to the domination of Yankee imperialism. The "stigma of race" has prevented assimilation and has played the role of demarking a nation-wide Black Ghetto and can, in a sense, be compared with the distinctive garb of the Jewish pale.

Yet "race" concepts have so dominated practically all sectors of the labor movement in the United States as to make even

the more advanced generally ineffectual in creating the necessary subjective conditions for a working-class, revolutionary solution of the Negro question. The attitude which marked the pre-War Socialist movement and which was characteristic of the most advanced position achieved by the working class in that period still remains the conception of leading Socialists to-day. It is worth while examining these views for they explain to a large measure the failure of even the more advanced sectors of the labor movement in the past to appreciate the real content of the Negro question and are still widely typical to-day. One of the most sustained attempts at an analysis of the Negro question by an "Old Guard" Socialist is to be found in James Oneal's pamphlet, *The Next Emancipation*. He sums up his views as follows:

. . . The problems and the interests of white and black workers are the same. There is one difference, however. This is the persistence of the color question. . . . There is race prejudice and race discrimination against Negroes in general. . . .

But note this: All this is founded on ignorance, prejudice and stupidity and the will of the masters of both white and black wage-workers to keep this prejudice alive, and often this prejudice is stirred up and fostered by the owners of industry to keep the workers divided.¹

If chattel slavery had left its imprint only in the minds of men, the problem would be indeed as comparatively simple as it is here made out to be. It is on this assumption that bourgeois liberals have based their program of education and general spiritual uplift. But chattel slavery has left its imprint on much more substantial soil, and a process—not always slow—of fundamental, physical, material uprooting is necessary to remove this imprint. It is the failure to recognize the real economic heritage of chattel slavery that causes people like Oneal to trace the one "special feature" of the Negro question to ignorance and stupidity. The logic of such an analysis may be summed up as follows: ignorance arises from prejudice, and prejudice arises from stupidity.

In his recent book, *Human Exploitation in the United States*, Norman Thomas devotes a chapter to the Negro question. The

following touches upon the pivotal point in any serious analysis of the Negro question:

At the end of the Civil War the Negro was freed without tools or land. Two things inevitably happened. In the first place, by all his past experience and present poverty, he was made to order for the tenant or share-cropper system rather than for independent farming. Because it was so difficult for him to escape that system he held large numbers of the white farmers to it. In the second place, as industrialism advanced both in the North and the South, his race furnished a reservoir of labor material ready to the employers' hand. The amazing thing is, considering all the circumstances, that the Negro has done as well as he has, and the capitalist exploitation of racial differences has not produced an even worse situation in America.²

Very little, indeed, differentiates this from the usual interpretation of the bourgeois social sciences. History, it appears, was supremely "just"—the Negro was "made to order" for the new plantation slavery and he was assigned the fateful dispensation of holding large numbers of white farmers to this system. What quarrel can there be with the system itself, one may well ask, if it fitted the Negro like a glove? Why fight the system if the Negro is to blame for everything? I am sure that Thomas would spiritedly deny such conclusions but he must admit that they are the only possible ones flowing from his analysis. As for the Negro having constituted so ready a labor reservoir for the employer, we have already shown under what special conjuncture of forces this was so and that, in the last analysis, the creation and the status of the Negro proletariat was conditioned by the plantation system. On our part, we must admit that Thomas' amazement "that the Negro has done as well as he has" follows logically from his main premises, which ignore the most essential historical and social factors.

An Oppressed Nation

What, then, is the nature of the Negro question? It must be correctly analyzed before an effective program can be evolved for its solution. Historical, economic and social data substantiate the Communist view that the problem of the Negro is the problem of an *oppressed nation*. The Negro question in the

United States is essentially of the same nature as that of retarded and oppressed peoples in Europe or in the colonies. Like these peoples the American Negroes have been retarded in their social development by American imperialism. Like them, the Negro people has been repressed by a more powerful nation and has been prevented from emerging as a free and independent nation on an equal footing with the other peoples of the earth. Like many of these peoples, the American Negro is retarded by pre-capitalist forms of exploitation; a large sector of the Negro people is still bound by semi-feudalism in the South. Like other oppressed nations and colonial peoples, the Negroes—not as a class nor as a caste, but as a whole people suffer from social and political oppression and from inequalities of all kinds. In addition to the problems of the various classes among the Negro people—problems which are shared with corresponding classes among other nations—the Negro people as a whole still face the problem of national liberation, of independence and freedom.

While the Negro question exhibits all the fundamental features of a national question it has its own special characteristics arising from the specific conditions in the United States. The powerful anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist potentialities of the liberation struggle of the Negro people have already been pointed out. But it is not sufficient to recognize this in general. It is necessary to gauge the class relationships involved, to see clearly the relationship of the Negro question to the development of the class struggle as a whole. We must therefore view the Negro question in its larger perspective, from the vantage point of ultimate program and ultimate solution if we are to know how best to grapple with the immediate problems of the day.

The fundamental task in the struggle for the liberation of the Negro people, around which all phases of the battle for equality hinges, is to uproot the economic and social remnants of chattel slavery. The proper tasks, historically speaking, of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1861-1877 have never been completed. The Civil War decade was in reality the historical prologue to the struggle for Negro liberation in the present period. The demands voiced by the representatives of the former slaves and by bourgeois democrats during that period

can be raised just as pertinently to-day. The continual agitation for land in the Union Leagues, the Negro conventions and the Reconstruction state legislatures touched the key point not only of that period but of the present South. The same is true in the domain of civil rights. The Colored People's Convention of South Carolina, held in Charleston in November, 1865, sent a memorial to Congress which bore the stamp of the bourgeois-democratic revolution more legibly than any other document produced by it. Above all it demanded that "a fair and impartial construction be given to the pledges of the government to us concerning the land question." (Radical Republican leaders had promised "forty acres and a mule.") All the democratic rights were demanded in this document—equal suffrage, a free public school system, the security of the press and the church, the right of jury service and office-holding, "the right to assemble in peaceful convention, to discuss the political questions of the day; the right to enter upon all avenues of agriculture, commerce, trade; to amass wealth by thrift and industry." The Memorial also asked Congress to permit the Negroes to retain their arms. The demands cover the whole gamut of bourgeois rights, from suffrage and the right to bear arms to private property.³ This document remains as pertinent to-day as when it was presented to Congress. The prime issues which were on the order of the day in the South in the Civil War period have been handed down to the present era for solution, on a higher plane of social development, in a changed social milieu.

The completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the South—which at the same time provides the basis for the solution of the Negro question—is in fact the outstanding peculiarity and most prominent native feature of the proletarian revolution in the United States. To fail to grasp the importance of this fact is to miss the whole perspective of the socialist revolution in this country, is to lack the slightest appreciation of all the class forces and social strata involved in the revolution.

Any one seriously concerned with the perspectives of proletarian revolution—not as a chimera, but as a reality—must recognize the oppressed Negro people as a powerful supplementary and even initiating force. This is true in the North as well as in the South. But the plantation South has all the prerequisites for providing a "Peasant War" as ally of the prole-

tarian revolution. The plantation economy, its by-products and its social superstructure, existing in the midst of a highly developed capitalist country, has engendered in the South contradictions, social antagonisms, class conflicts more violent and sharper than in any other section of the country. The contradictions inherent in capitalism are here sharpened by antagonisms left as a heritage from a previous historical period. How such a combination of forces has the possibilities of quick maturity into conscious social upheaval was shown in the Russian Revolution of 1905 and even more conclusively in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

To complete the Civil War revolution is the key to the solution of the Negro question. But it would be ridiculous to envision a new "Civil War" in terms of 1860-1865. The tasks remain essentially the same; the destruction of the plantation and tenant system, the confiscation of the landed estates for the benefit of the tenants and poor farmers, and the achievement of the fullest democracy for the masses. But conditions are no longer similar. The slave survivals exist in the midst of a highly developed capitalist country. Tasks which, historically speaking, were within the proper domain of the bourgeois revolution of the 19th century have been passed as a heritage to the proletarian revolution. This revolution cannot develop and succeed without at the same time destroying all pre-capitalist forms of exploitation. In the United States the uprooting of the slave survivals and the solution of the Negro question are the most important of these.

Since the Civil War, class alignments have changed. In the first place, the present plantation masters, instead of finding their chief opponents in the industrial capitalists as during the Civil War, now find themselves fully at one with the capitalist class as a whole and especially with the financial oligarchy. Secondly, the plantation and tenant peasantry find at their side a large proletariat whose class interests propel them towards a final struggle against capitalism. In the 'sixties there was but one principal question—the struggle against the slave power. To-day the struggle against the plantation system develops in the midst of a general struggle against capitalism. Thirdly, during the Civil War decade the chief ally of the Negro was the northern bourgeoisie, which because of its own class interests

was bound to and did desert the Negro masses to the power of the former slaveowners. Under present circumstances, a revolutionary proletariat finds its most important ally in the Negro people, who in their struggle against the relics of chattel slavery must at the same time strike a heavy blow at capitalism. And the Negro people find their only dependable and their most powerful ally in the proletariat, whose class interests encompass the solution of the Negro question.

The Communist solution of the Negro question is premised primarily on the analysis of the Negro question as a national question and upon that perspective of the proletarian revolution in this country which includes the solution of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the South.

The abstract, formalized slogan about "equality" in general has for the first time been given real content and application. The slogan of equal rights for Negroes has for so long been, at least verbally, in the program of petty-bourgeois democrats that its "justice" is generally conceded. It has been written upon the banner of northern liberalism by the Abolition movement, the Civil War and the consequent struggle for civil rights. Today they understand it only in a formalistic, juridical sense, although in the past revolutionary means were employed by their class to make civil rights for Negroes a reality. The Communists have broadened the concept of equal rights, in the first place, by extending it beyond the social and political field to the economic sphere as well, as expressed in the demand for "equal pay for equal work," "the right to all jobs," etc. Secondly, the Communists maintain that the struggle for equal rights and against all forms of discrimination and persecution should be organized and led, not in a reformist or opportunist fashion, but in such a way as to involve the broadest masses of whites and Negroes in a militant movement for Negro liberation. Thirdly, the Communists hold that the working class must become the chief protagonist and leader in the current, everyday struggle for equal rights in all spheres.

The Solution of the Negro Question

But the most basic programmatic difference between the liberals (as well as Socialists) and the Communists hinges around the application of the program of equal rights to the

South, and therefore to the fundamental source of Negro oppression throughout the country, a difference based upon diametrically opposed concepts of the nature of the question. The slogan of equal rights applied to its fullest extent to the specific conditions pertaining in the South can culminate only in the realization of the right of self-determination for the Negro people of the Black Belt. This is a fully realizable and historically necessary solution. The right of self-determination is the necessary concomitant of the struggle against plantation slavery and for equal rights and is, in fact, the *key democratic demand* arising from the historical task of wiping out all the remnants of chattel slavery. It alone can guarantee the final solution of the Negro question.

To realize the right of self-determination in the Black Belt is to realize democracy in the South. But this is connected with a change in the basic structure of southern society.

Any real, basic, complete transformation of the plantation economy can come about only as the result of an agrarian revolution in the South. We have already discussed the factors which are maturing this revolution, which are propelling the farming masses toward rebellion against plantation overlords. The plantation is situated precisely in the area where the Negroes are the majority of the population. The confiscation of the landed estates and the realization of the primary agrarian aims of the revolution would give rise to new political institutions carrying with them the fullest democracy for the masses of the people. A really democratic transformation in the Black Belt, in the plantation area, would mean, first of all, that the Negroes, hitherto excluded from democracy, would now in fact be the very carriers of the widest democracy. There is no better assurance of such complete democracy than that the Negroes are to-day the most oppressed of all in the South and that they constitute the chief revolutionary sector of the plantation populace. During the Reconstruction period those who had been just freed from chattel slavery were the most vigorous proponents of bourgeois democracy, demanding and fighting for the whole range of democratic rights. With the tremendous social power released by an agrarian revolution and directed into conscious channels by a proletariat there can be no doubt of the tremendous role that will be played by the Negro peasant masses in uprooting

the semi-feudal institutions of the South completely, basically and irrevocably.

The revolutionary governmental power which is created in the Black Belt as the result of a democratic-agrarian overturn will represent those classes participating in and making the revolution. While the immediate tasks performed by the agrarian revolution will be bourgeois-democratic—first on its order of business will be to secure the destruction of the semi-slave economy and the distribution of the land to the landless—it is out of the question that the revolution will be limited by its bourgeois-democratic aims, or that it will develop under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. Such a course of development was possible only in the earlier stage of capitalism, when bourgeois revolutions could have no other aim but the overthrow of the feudal ruling class and the establishment in power of the bourgeoisie, when the chief contending classes were the landed aristocracy and the rising middle class. But to-day the bourgeoisie has long been in power and the prime question of the day is the socialist revolution. The historical course of development has given the proletariat the task as well of securing the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the South. In 1860-1877 this was not yet the case: the working class was still too immature, too undeveloped to play a leading independent role in the Civil War revolution. That lot fell to the rapidly growing industrial bourgeoisie of the North. To-day, due to the high stage of the development of capitalism at which the agrarian masses of the semi-feudal South are being swept into motion, the leading role would be played by the working class.

The role played by the proletariat in the fundamental Negro liberation struggle cannot and will not be sectional, *i. e.*, restricted to the proletariat of the South. The presence of a large Negro proletariat in the North, in the area of the most highly developed capitalism, provides the intimate link between the proletariat as a whole and the agrarian-emancipatory struggle in the South. The participation of the working class throughout the country in the struggle for Negro rights incorporates the aims of the democratic liberation movement in the program of the proletariat as a class. But the development of capitalism in the South itself has created on the spot a white and black

proletariat which must play a decisive role in the democratic revolution.

The role of the working class in the democratic revolution in the South can be compared with that of the Russian proletariat in the Revolution of 1905. Lenin estimated the character of the 1905 Revolution as follows:

The peculiar feature of the Russian Revolution is that in its social content it was a *bourgeois-democratic* revolution, but in its method of struggle it was a *proletarian* revolution. It was a bourgeois-democratic revolution, since the aim towards which it strove directly and which it could reach directly, with the aid of its own forces was a democratic republic, an eight-hour day and the confiscation of the immense estates of the nobility—all measures achieved almost completely in the French bourgeois revolution in 1792 and 1793.

At the same time the Russian Revolution was also a proletarian revolution, not only in the sense that the proletariat was the leading force, the vanguard of the movement, but also in the sense that the specifically proletarian means of struggle—namely the strike—was the principal instrument employed for rousing the masses and the most characteristic phenomenon in the wave-like rise of decisive events.⁴

The situation in the South is different in that it takes place in the milieu of a much more highly developed capitalism and in the same sense that the Revolution of 1917 differed from the Revolution of 1905. In other words, the proletariat is now most directly concerned with the revolution for the overthrow of capitalism and the solution of the bourgeois-democratic tasks in the South are linked up with and are a part of its ripe class aim. The Negro people and the agrarian masses play the role of allies of the proletariat in the socialist revolution. But in the democratic movement itself the proletariat will play a role similar to that of the Russian working class in the Revolution of 1905. Due to the maturity of capitalism to-day for the socialist revolution, the bourgeois-democratic phase in the South, whether it precedes or follows the proletarian revolution in the United States as a whole, will very rapidly grow over into a socialist revolution.

As a result of these peculiarities of the revolution in the

South, the governmental power which is created in the Black Belt as a result of the democratic revolution would be a *dictatorship of the workers and the peasantry*. It would be a democratic peoples' government, *i.e.*, power would be not only in the hands of the workers (a dictatorship of the proletariat) but in the hands of the *workers and peasantry* (the share-croppers, poor tenants and farmers), in the hands of the overwhelming majority of the people. The character of the governmental power, therefore, reflects the essential democratic nature of the revolution in the plantation area, as distinguished from the essential proletarian nature of the revolution in the rest of the United States, where remnants of feudalism transported from Europe had been wiped out in the course of capitalist development at a very early period, where, therefore, there never was and cannot be to-day any question of completing a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

The highest political expression of the fulfillment of the democratic revolution in the South is the creation of the Negro Republic in the area approximating the present Black Belt. The demand for a democratic people's republic in the plantation area, therefore, is likely to be the prime slogan of the revolutionary democratic movement in this area, the summation of all the bourgeois-democratic aims of the revolution there. We use the term "Negro Republic" not in the sense of "Negro domination" or a "dictatorship of Negroes." The class composition of such a governmental power, as we have already explained, is working class and peasant, both white and Negro. In such a government, from the local administrative units to the top bodies, the Negroes would be greatly predominant, because they form the overwhelming majority of these classes in the area where such a transformation would take place, and because the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution is intimately bound up with, is in fact the achievement of, the liberation of the Negro people from the yoke of imperialism. The term "Negro Republic" signifies that as a result of the fullest democracy, won for the first time in the South, the Negro necessarily plays the leading and most important role in the new Republic.

We can cite a comparable situation from our own history. The Reconstruction state governments of the South from 1868

to about 1875 included representatives of the northern bourgeoisie, the southern middle class and small landowning whites, and the ex-slaves. In the Black Belt counties the local offices were held almost exclusively by Negroes. The lower houses of three southern state legislatures (South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana) had a majority of Negro representatives, while a number of Negroes were sent to both the House and Senate of the United States. If fuller democracy had been won, there would have been a much higher proportion of Negroes in the state bodies and in Congress, and they would have held most of the governmental positions in a number of southern states. And if the Black Belt had not been dissected by the existing borders of the states in such a way that the upland white sections of each state cut down on the representation of the Negroes in each state body, there would have been a much more complete expression of democracy. In the course of a modern "Civil War," when an entirely new Republic would arise out of the Black Belt territory, created by really democratic classes, history will be improved upon a hundredfold.

The most crucial test of freedom would arise in the relationship between the Negro Republic and the United States as a whole. It is at this point that the right of self-determination becomes *the* question, the pivot on which hinges the reality of freedom for the Negro. Thus, the right of self-determination for the Negroes in the Black Belt, as raised by the Communist Party, is the summation of a number of social and political steps and includes, as an integral part, the completion of the democratic revolution in the South and the creation of the Negro Republic. The realization of the right of self-determination, as has been demonstrated in the Soviet Union, does not necessarily mean separation and the creation of totally independent political states. The right of self-determination is purely a political question, a question of the relationship of political state entities, and means the right of a people to choose freely between complete independence as a separate state and federation with a state or group of states. The important, crucial point is *the right to choose freely*, without pressure, coercion or interference, from any other nation. This is the key political question in the relationship between nations.

One cannot say in advance under what conditions the ques-

tion of the right of self-determination will present itself for solution with regard to the Negro Republic—*i. e.*, whether at that time capitalism will still exist in the United States or a proletarian revolution will already have established a Socialist Soviet Government in the country.

In any case, the Communist supports the complete realization of the right of self-determination, no matter what the choice, because it is only on the basis of a free, democratic choice that a federation of Socialist nations can exist.

THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION: A REPLY TO CRITICS

THE Communist slogan of the right of self-determination for the Negroes in the Black Belt has been criticized in many quarters, both on "practical" and on principle grounds. In some instances this criticism has arisen from misconceptions of the Communist program, in others from fundamental disagreements in analysis or political positions. Opposition on "practical" or "factual" grounds more often hides a real difference in political orientation. But for the sake of clarity in the argument, we will consider the objections on "practical" and on principle grounds separately. We might say from the start that all the objections raised against the Communist position on the Negro question have been met with before in one form or another in the long controversies on the national question in pre-War European and Russian Social-Democracy, and have been thoroughly and decisively treated by Lenin. Although these objections now appear in their "peculiar American dress" their actual content has remained the same.

"Practical" Objections

Critics of the Communist analysis of the Negro question have frequently based their counter-argument on the assertion that this analysis is but a mechanical application of a policy perhaps appropriate elsewhere, but having no reality in the United States for the simple reason that there is no contiguous territory of Negro majority in the country where the right of self-determination may be exercised. Some would at most concede small and disconnected areas of Negro majorities in the South which offer no possibility for a national state entity. Norman Thomas, for example, conceding that Negroes are in the majority "in one or at most two states" and are "doubtless in a majority in

many counties," asked rhetorically, "Will . . . any Communist tell us where such autonomous republics are to be . . . ? If this plank means anything, it means autonomous Negro Republics like the autonomous cultural republics in Soviet Russia." (Our italics.)¹

The matter of fact involved in this argument, I think, has already been adequately established: there is an area of Negro majority which has not only territorial but also historical continuity. If anything hinders the recognition of this fact it can only be servile respect for legalism and for the inviolability of state lines. The present boundaries of the 48 states have purely political and administrative functions. They do not demark any differences of a national, sectional or economic character in the people or the social organization in the territory within each state boundary. To alter these borders might cause some inconveniences in administration but would violate no principle of democracy nor the customs, ideals, wishes or aspirations of any people. In the South, the state boundaries have served to obscure the essential economic and social uniqueness of the Black Belt area and have been useful in excluding Negroes from participation in political activity within each state. A complete rearrangement of the existing state lines in the South, such as is involved in the creation of the Negro Republic, would give full political form to the solution of the basic contradictions.

There can be no question of "autonomous Negro Republics" but only of a Negro Republic in the territory approximating the area of Negro majority. And it is necessary to realize that the matter of *frontiers*, of the boundary of this Republic, is a real and important one. Thomas, for instance, by comparing his imaginative "autonomous Negro Republics" with "autonomous cultural republics" in the Soviet Union only displays the deepest confusion on the national question. If by the term "autonomous cultural republic" he means simply cultural autonomy for a people—and it is difficult to see what other meaning this term can have—there are no such republics in the Soviet Union. The Republics federated in the U.S.S.R. are political state entities whose boundaries have been determined according to the sympathies and nationalities of the people. The recognition of these boundaries amounted to the realization of the right of self-determination, *i.e.*, the nations became self-governing, inde-

pendent and free to federate with or separate from the Union. As Lenin has so often pointed out in his discussions on the national question the demand for "national cultural autonomy" as raised by the Austrian and Polish Social-Democrats evaded the whole question of self-determination. For the bourgeoisie of the oppressing nation would have little objection to permitting autonomous cultural institutions such as the division of schools according to language or nationality, as long as it retained the oppressed nation within its own state, *i. e.*, retained political domination over this people. As an example, as the only example, of this kind of "national cultural autonomy" under capitalism Lenin points to the Jim-Crow ("national" or race") schools for Negroes in the South of the United States with the accompanying social degradation, oppression and cultural retardation of the Negro.²

The situation in Central Asia after the October Revolution throws an illuminating light upon the problem. Here there lived a conglomeration of peoples—Uzbeks, Kazaks, Tadjiks, Turkomans, Kirghiz—who inherited from their old feudal, patriarchal and tribal past, as well as from tzarism, a whole array of national enmities, comparable to the prejudice and distrust which exists between white and Negro in this country. The Bokhara Soviet Republic, established in 1920, had all these peoples living within its borders, with the Uzbeks, by virtue of their previous supremacy, themselves still displaying dangerous elements of chauvinism and subject to the distrust and national jealousy of the other peoples. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the nationalities living in Bokhara also inhabited other Central Asian Soviet Republics. In the Khiva Republic, the majority was Uzbek; sections of the Turkestan Republic were inhabited by Uzbeks, Tadjiks, Turkomans and Kirghiz. This complicated national situation was resolved when the Bokhara Soviet Republic in 1924 joined the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, making possible the reconstitution of the Republics on the principle of the self-determination of their peoples. Or as the Resolution of the All-Bokhara Congress put it: "to unite the separate parts into one national unit, to give to the nations the soviet state formation." Out of Bokhara and sections of old Khiva and Turkestan there arose the two new republics of Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan, each comprising those sections of Cen-

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knack of giving neat and precise expression to the most important misconceptions regarding the question. The Communist slogan, he says of "self-determination in the Black Belt" is bad socialism and bad sense. It cannot be carried out under capitalism. For a minority race like the Negroes to insist that in counties or states where they may happen to be in a majority they should set up a Negro government is to invite the worst sort of race war. In a socialist society the Negro, who speaks the same language as the other workers and wants the same opportunities, will not need racial self-determination in the Black Belt. The effort to perpetuate the sort of race consciousness that this would imply will inevitably conflict with the working class consciousness which Communism wants to develop. The answer to Negro exploitation is equality of every sort of opportunity all over America; it is not 'self-determination in the Black Belt.'"⁴

We have already demonstrated that the right of self-determination in this instance does not mean the setting up of isolated, disconnected Negro states, and that the Negro Republic is not a state exclusively Negro, nor dominated by Negroes in the sense of a "Negro dictatorship." That the Negro speaks the same language as the white has absolutely no bearing upon the question under dispute. While this fact is an important factor facilitating federation and amalgamation and the solidarity of the white and Negro laboring masses, it is not pertinent to the question of nationhood. English is the dominant language of the inhabitants of England, the United States and Ireland, yet no one on this account would deny the distinct, clearly marked national traits of these peoples. The fact that the Irish speak English has not for one moment lessened the reality of British domination nor undermined the struggle for independence of the Irish.

As for the rest, Thomas' main argument may be summed up as follows: self-determination is impossible under capitalism and unnecessary under socialism. This, it may be said, is the summation of practically all opposition in principle to the Communist position. Merely to state it should evoke in the minds of all those familiar with the history of the international Marxist movement the long controversies which raged around this point in which Lenin upheld the revolutionary Marxist position

proven to be correct especially by the Russian Revolution. I will first outline the theoretical position of Lenin on this question, and then discuss it in relation to the American Negro.

In answer to the objection that self-determination was impossible or "illusory" within the framework of capitalism, Lenin pointed to an actual example of the realization of this right under capitalism, the separation of Norway from Sweden in 1905.*

But, Lenin pointed out, this instance is only a rare exception "for not only the right of nations to self-determination, but all the fundamental demands of political democracy are 'possible of achievement' under imperialism, only incompletely, in a mutilated form, and as a rare exception." The situation in the colonies and with regard to those peoples who still have to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution is different than in the instance of Norway and Sweden. In the latter case, both were well developed capitalist countries in the economic and political sense. But because democratic tasks cannot be completely fulfilled under capitalism, because the realization of the democratic demands would entail in a number of instances a series of revolutions is no reason to drop the demand for self-determination, as the fullest expression of the democratic solution of the national question. Lenin continues:

The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies, as advanced by all revolutionary Social-Democrats, is also "impossible of achievement" under capitalism without a series of revolutions. This does not imply, however, that Social-Democracy must refrain from conducting an immediate and determined struggle for *all* these demands—to do so would be merely to the advantage of the bourgeoisie and reaction. On the contrary, Social-Democracy must formulate and put forward all these demands, not in a reformist but in a revolutionary way; not by keeping within the framework of bourgeois legality, but by breaking through it; not by confining themselves to parliamentary speeches and verbal protests, but by drawing the masses into real action, by widening and fomenting the struggle for every kind of funda-

* The referendum on the question of separation was taken in Norway on August 13, 1905. The vote was 368,200 for separation and 184 against, with 80% of the eligible voters participating. On October 25, 1905, the Swedish government informed the foreign powers that it had recognized Norway as an independent country.

mental democratic demand right up to the direct onslaught of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, *i.e.*, to the social revolution which will expropriate the bourgeoisie. . . .

. . . The intensification of national oppression under imperialism makes it necessary for Social-Democracy not to renounce the struggle for what the bourgeoisie describes as the "Utopian" right of separation of nations, but on the contrary, they must take advantage more than ever before of conflicts arising *also* on this ground for the purpose of rousing mass action and revolutionary attacks upon the bourgeoisie.⁵

Lenin explains further that with a slight change in the political and strategical relationships among the big powers new national states may result. It is interesting to note that in 1916 Lenin predicted that as a result of the War, Poland, Finland, Hungary and a Czech state might be formed and he called attention to the mapping out by the British of a series of such states in anticipation of an Allied victory.⁶ Imperialists utilized the slogan of self-determination both as a deception by which they hid the predatory character of the World War and as a measure of defense against the influence of the Soviet Union. During the War, the English promised freedom to Belgium, the Germans promised freedom to Poland and to Ireland. To-day, in mustering forces against its chief rival on the Pacific, Japan promises independence to the Philippines. The national aspirations of the peoples formerly oppressed by tsarism were utilized by imperialism against the Soviet Union in establishing the buffer national states along the European border of the U.S.S.R. The creation of national states, no matter how and for what reasons, is in itself possible within the framework of imperialism. Nor can it be argued that imperialism makes the right of self-determination for the smaller nations illusory since they are all *economically dependent* upon the great powers. This thesis was developed at length in Rosa Luxemburg's book, *The National Question and Autonomy*, which, during the years immediately preceding the World War, served as the bible of practically all who opposed Paragraph 9 of the program of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, which demanded self-determination for the oppressed peoples. In reply to Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin declares that her thesis has nothing to do with the question. Even large states, he pointed out, are economically de-

pendent, for example, Russia upon the finance capital of the rich capitalist countries, and the United States during the 19th century upon Europe practically as a colony. It is purely a question of political separation, and not of economic independence.⁷ In further elaboration of this point, Lenin shows that:

Finance capital, in its striving towards expansion, will "freely" bribe the most democratic and republican governments and the elected officials of any country, however "independent" it may be. The domination of finance capital, as of capital in general, cannot be abolished by any *kind* of reform in the realm of political democracy, and self-determination belongs wholly and exclusively to this realm. The domination of finance capital, however, does not in the least destroy the significance of political democracy as the freer, wider, and more distinct *form* of class oppression and class struggle.⁸

There are many instances of countries being "annexed" in the economic sense, although they enjoy formal political independence as, for instance, Cuba, Haiti and a number of central and South American Republics which are economically under the domination of American imperialism, although they are independent political states. Imperialism tries to destroy this political independence by gaining direct influence in the administration and governments of these countries because economic control is much easier and more convenient after political annexation.

Thus, Lenin concludes, all the arguments about the economic impossibility of achieving the demands of political democracy (including the right of self-determination) under capitalism "reduce themselves to a theoretically incorrect definition of the general and fundamental relations of capitalism and of political democracy in general."⁹

Finally, Lenin is very severe with those Social-Democrats who evaded the question of self-determination. Trotsky and Martov, in 1916 leading Mensheviks, evaded this question and elicited the following comment from Lenin: "Whatever may be the subjective 'well-meaning intentions' of Trotsky and Martov, objectively they support Russian social-imperialism by their evasiveness." A Socialist who recognizes self-determination of

nations in this sense "without fighting for the freedom of separation for the nations who are oppressed by tsarism is in reality an imperialist and a lackey of tsarism."¹⁰

Thus, the right of self-determination even to the point of separation or secession is quite possible under capitalism, *i.e.*, it is one of those democratic rights which are possible of achievement within the framework of the capitalist system of society. But the question of the possibility of self-determination under imperialism is only a part of the question of the possibility of democracy under capitalism. The rise of fascism has given additional weight to Lenin's observation: "The whole point is that 'democracy' is nothing but the proclaiming and exercising of 'rights' that are very little and very conditionally exercised under capitalism."¹¹ But because these rights are only very conditional and very limited can be no reason for failing to carry on a struggle for them—no class conscious worker, for example, will cease to struggle for his right to picket just because the employers and the state forces deny him this democratic right. The Communist approach to this question is succinctly summarized by Lenin as follows:

We must combine the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary program and revolutionary tactics relative to all democratic demands: a republic, a militia,* officials elected by the people, equal rights for women, self-determination of nations, etc. While capitalism exists, all these demands are realizable only as an exception, and in an incomplete, distorted form. Basing ourselves on democracy as it already exists, exposing its incompleteness under capitalism, we advocate the overthrow of capitalism, expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a necessary basis both for the abolition of the poverty of the masses and for a complete and manifold realization of all democratic reforms.¹²

We will now consider the question of the possibility of the right of self-determination for the Negroes in the Black Belt under capitalism. Before the question of self-determination can present itself for solution in a capitalist United States the agrarian revolution must break out in the South and mature to the point of placing the slogan of the Negro Republic on the

* A people's army.

order of the day. While capitalism still reigns in the United States, there can be no question of federation or separation of a Negro Republic, as a practical question of the moment, until that Republic is being fought for by the masses or is actually taking form as the culmination of a democratic revolution. Such a Republic may take form as the result of a series of victories on the part of the revolutionary struggle—the creation of councils or Soviets of peasants and workers seizing power at first on a local scale, extending their sphere, consolidating a number of areas and establishing the hegemony of the new revolutionary governmental power as the democratic revolution spreads and is successful. Or as a result of the rapid growth of the agrarian upheaval a whole series of democratic rights—such as the vote, office-holding, control of municipalities and county governments, etc.—may be wrested from the capitalist-landlord power and already project the question of self-determination as a practical question around which an immediate political struggle can be waged *even before* the victory of the agrarian rebellion. The question of whether self-determination of the Negroes can be realized while capitalism still exists in the United States must, therefore, reduce itself to the question of whether it is possible for the agrarian revolution to break out and develop in the South while capitalism still reigns in the country.

To see the question in its true light is already to find the answer. To deny that the agrarian revolution can develop in the plantation area not necessarily at the same time as the proletarian revolution or after the revolution but also before the proletarian revolution comes to a head, is to lose sight of the essential peculiarity of southern economic and social organization, *i. e.*, is to deny the specific bourgeois-democratic tasks which are clamoring for accomplishment in the South. Due to the accumulation of especially sharp antagonisms in the Black Belt—intensified by the difficulties of the plantation economy during the present period of the chronic crisis of capitalism—it is quite possible, and may even be probable, that the peasant revolution develop at a faster pace, come more quickly to a decisive stage, than the proletarian revolution in the country as a whole, and may in itself be a tremendous stimulus to the maturing of the proletarian revolution. It is precisely because

conditions for such development pertain in the South that the Black Belt may be considered the "weakest link," the most vulnerable spot in the structure of capitalism in the United States.

Under such conditions, if capitalism is hard pressed either by inner developments leading simultaneously to the maturing of the forces of proletarian revolution or by international difficulties due to war, or by both, the capitalist government may be forced to concede self-determination or substantial concessions in that direction. Self-determination may be wrested from the capitalists in the midst of a rapidly growing revolutionary situation without necessarily involving on the next day the overthrow of capitalism. It is even possible that imperialism, faced with a proletarian revolution, may attempt to appease, in one form or another, the demand for a Negro Republic especially since this would not involve any basic transformation of capitalism but only the loss, or partial loss, of one, although important, sphere of imperialist exploitation.

It is impossible to predict in advance what the actual course of events will be—whether the agrarian revolution will precede or be secured by the proletarian revolution. But it is necessary to recognize the perspectives of revolutionary development in the United States, the essential and highly important role played by the Negro liberation struggle in the maturing and consolidation of the proletarian revolution. In any case, the question of whether self-determination will or will not be realized under capitalism has no bearing upon the question of the correctness or legitimacy of the slogan. The demand for the right of self-determination of the Negro people in the Black Belt arises from the economic and social basis of the Negro question, expresses the essential bourgeois-democratic nature of this question and prescribes the political form within which it can be solved. The Communists agitate for self-determination aside from the question of whether it is to be achieved under capitalism or under socialism, for this expresses the direction which the struggle for Negro liberation must take, and encompasses all the bourgeois-democratic tasks which must be fulfilled before liberation from the yoke of imperialism, or the heritage left by imperialism, is established.

Is Self-Determination Necessary under Socialism?

The question of whether self-determination is necessary under socialism has been shifted from the purely theoretical realm to actual reality by the Russian Revolution and the experiences of the Soviet Union. It has been shown conclusively that only by the complete realization of the right of self-determination is it possible to overcome age-old national enmities and prejudices, to establish the conditions of equality of all peoples in a federation of Socialist nations. This is one of the pivotal points in Lenin's teachings on the national question. In his "The Discussion of the Right of Self-Determination Summed Up," written in 1916, Lenin reviewed the discussion since 1903 with the Polish Social-Democrats, who attempted to evade the whole question of secession and based their polemic upon the "unrealizability under capitalism, unnecessary under socialism" argument. Lenin summarized the Marxist position as follows:

It is *impossible* under capitalism to abolish national or any political oppression. To do this it is *necessary* to abolish classes, *i.e.*, to introduce socialism. . . . By transforming capitalism into socialism, the proletariat creates the *possibility* for the complete abolition of national oppression; this possibility will turn into *reality* "only"—"only!"—if complete democracy is introduced in all spheres, including the defining of state boundaries determined according to the "sympathies" of the population, including a complete freedom of secession period. This in turn will lead in practice to the complete elimination of all national friction, of all national suspicion, and to a rapid rapprochement and fusion of nations, which will culminate in the "dying out" of the state.¹³

The question is often put this way: If the overthrow of capitalism will remove the basis of national oppression and a Soviet Government in the United States will guarantee complete economic, social and political equality to the Negroes why will it then be necessary to have self-determination? We have already answered this, in part, by showing that the full realization of equality in the area where Negroes form the majority of the population means the Negro Republic and, as a necessary corollary, the right of self-determination. There is no other way

for a Soviet Government in the United States really to guarantee "complete economic, social and political equality" unless it guarantees self-determination to a Negro Republic in the Black Belt. One of the first steps of a Soviet Government in the United States, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, would be to proclaim the right of self-determination for the Negro people in the Black Belt. This proclamation would mean nothing in itself unless all the necessary steps are taken to create the possibility of exercising the right of self-determination; *i. e.*, the carrying through (or the completion, if already started) of the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the South: the wiping out of the economic remnants of chattel slavery, the confiscation of the landed estates and their division among the landless, the securing of the fullest political democracy for the masses, the Republic, etc. For only in this way will there be formed the basis for a really free amalgamation on the basis of equality, without privileges to the whites which the Negroes do not enjoy.

The considerations of "national suspicion" and "national friction" which Lenin points out in the quotation given above, plays even a more important role in making necessary the full realization of self-determination for the American Negro. For socialism does not drop out of the sky ready-made—it must work with the human material formed under capitalism. Decades of oppression under chattel slavery and under capitalism will leave powerful traces of the "white superiority" ideology, of deep distrust of the whites by the Negroes, a whole complex of ideas, prejudices, enmities, as well as actual and real inequalities as a result of capitalist oppression and super-exploitation of the Negro. The prime task of the white proletariat, of its Government, of its Party, will be to wipe out this heritage from capitalism by guaranteeing the fullest equality to the Negro, by making possible for the first time a real freedom of choice as a preliminary for really democratic federation and eventual amalgamation. The realization of the Negro Republic and the right of self-determination makes possible the final solution of the Negro question under socialism.

At the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1919, Lenin, arguing against the "leftist" interpretation of the principle of self-determination ("self-determination for the

toilers") showed in what full, the fullest, sense this principle was to be applied by a proletariat which has won power. The point had been made that the Soviet Government should recognize the right of self-determination for the peoples of the former tsarist Empire only if class differentiation among these peoples had matured to the point where the former native ruling class had been overthrown. Lenin argued most strenuously against this point of view. He cited the example of Finland,

a democratic country, much more developed and much more civilized than we are. The process of separation is proceeding in Finland, the process of differentiation of the proletariat; it is proceeding in its own peculiar way, much more painfully than in our country. The Finns experienced the dictatorship of Germany; they are now experiencing the dictatorship of the Entente; and thanks to the fact that we recognized the right of nations to self-determination, the process of differentiation has been facilitated. I very well remember the scene at Smolny when it fell to my lot to grant a charter to Svinkhovod . . . the representative of the Finnish bourgeoisie who had played the part of hangman. He amiably shook my hand and we paid each other compliments. How unpleasant that was! *But it had to be done because at that time the bourgeoisie falsely persuaded the people, the toiling masses, to believe that the Moscovites were chauvinists and that the Great Russians wanted to crush the Finns.* (Our italics.)¹⁴

The Bashkir Republic, still under the influence of its native exploiters, had demanded and obtained separation from the Russian Soviet Government. To have refused this separation either to Finland or to the Bashkirs, Lenin maintained in the same speech, would have been Great Russian chauvinism. True, he said, federation, the amalgamation of people into larger states, was more progressive from the point of view of economic development, of social planning and the building of socialism. But he said:

It is wrong to regard the national question from the point of view of the necessity of economic unity. Of course such unity is necessary. But we must seek it by preaching, by agitation, by voluntary union. The Bashkirs distrust the Great Russians because the Great Russians are more cultured and they used their culture to rob the Bashkirs. For this reason

the name Great Russian sounds in these outlying Bashkir regions like "oppressor," "swindler." This must be remembered and combated. But this will take a long time. You cannot abolish it by any decree. We must be very cautious in this matter. Caution is necessary particularly from our nation as a Great Russian nation, which has aroused frenzied hatred among the other nations. . . .

I cite these words of Lenin not only to show the theory underlying the question of self-determination and its necessity under socialism, but also for the benefit of those who believe that the prejudice between white and Negro in the United States is something peculiar, something quite outside the domain of socialist theory and solution. To large masses of Negroes the term white is also sometimes synonymous with the term "lyncher," "exploiter," "chauvinist"—because decades of exploitation and lynching at the hands of whites have created this distrust of *all* whites, just as decades of slavery and capitalism have spread far the influence of chauvinism, and created discrimination even in the labor movement. With the abolition of capitalism, the economic and social basis for this mutual distrust will also be abolished, but there will remain ideological remnants. Negro petty-bourgeois nationalist leaders to-day harp upon the "inborn" "unchangeable" prejudice of the whites. When Dr. DuBois says that the Soviets "would do no more than exploit colored labor in order to raise the status of the whites" he gives voice to and takes advantage of this distrust. The key question from the viewpoint of the Negro masses is: Will the white proletariat in power be any different than the white capitalists? The guaranteeing of the right of self-determination, including the right of separation, is the decisive answer to this question.

In still another sense will the right of self-determination facilitate the wiping out of all racial prejudices and discrimination. The inequalities in the economic status of the Negro—share-cropping under primitive conditions of agriculture, lack of industrial training either as skilled workers or technicians, inadequate representation in the professions, sciences, etc.—as well as the cultural inequalities arising from this economic status and from the retardation of the Negro by capitalism, the ideological distortions created by the atmosphere of "white superi-

ority," will not disappear on the day that Soviet power is proclaimed. These inequalities will be received as a heritage from capitalism and the fullest equality, including economic equality, can be established only by overcoming them most rapidly. Economic equality lies at the basis of all equality. Thus, the program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union recognizes that the main task of the Party "consists in helping the toiling masses of other non-Great Russian nations to overtake Central Russia which has gone far ahead of them." As Joseph Stalin put it, the essence of the national question in the Soviet Union "consists in the minor nationalities overcoming the backwardness (economic, political and cultural) which they have inherited from the past, in order to make it possible for the backward peoples to overtake Central Russia in a political, cultural, and economic sense."¹⁵ This is the key to the rapid solution of the national question being achieved in the Soviet Union. In Kazakhstan, for instance, which under the colonizing policy of tsarism had developed no industry to speak of, under the First Five-Year Plan was becoming the center of the non-ferrous metal industry of the entire Soviet Union; oil, phosphorus, rubber, chemical, coal, industries and the railroad were rapidly developed. The rate of development was much swifter than in Central Russia—under the Plan the basic capital of Kazakhstan industry increased more than 500%, while the average increase in the basic capital of the entire industry of the U.S.S.R. increased not quite 300%.¹⁶ The same is true of all the outlying regions of the Soviet Union, which are inhabited by the formerly oppressed peoples who are given direct material aid in socialist construction by the more highly developed Central Russia, inhabited by the Great-Russians, the former oppressing nation.

In the case of the Negro in the United States, while a Soviet Government would remove all obstacles to equality of opportunity and encourage development for the Negroes in the rest of the country as well, its main concern in this field would necessarily have to be in granting direct aid to rapid economic development in the South. This would include aid in overcoming the primitiveness of agriculture, introducing modern rational methods, the creation of new industries and the expansion of old ones so as to create equilibrium between industry and

agriculture in the Black Belt, etc. The right of self-determination for the Negro Republic would facilitate such extension of direct aid on a free, voluntary and unhampered basis. In this connection it is important to note the relations between the Bokharan Soviet Republic and the Russian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics (the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was not formed until 1922). On March 4, 1921, six months after its formation, the Bokharan Republic entered into a series of military, political and economic agreements with the R.S.F.S.R. The latter renounced "the colonial policy of the former capitalist governments of Russia for which the laboring masses of Bokhara, like other nations of the East, have always been an object of exploitation," and recognized, "without reservation, the self-government and complete independence of the Bokharan Soviet Republic, with all the consequences deriving therefrom." The agreements settled the question of boundaries, arranged for mutual military defense and provided that "the RSFSR shall lend its assistance to the BSR for the establishment and development of its industrial and other economic enterprises by putting at the disposal of the latter all necessary materials, implements of production, and the like. . ." also "the necessary contingents of engineers, technicians, hydro-technicians, and other experts for prospecting as well as for organizing mining and manufacturing industries of the BSR and for irrigation works . . ." also "instructors, including military instructors with a knowledge of the native languages teachers, school-manuals, literature, material for the equipment of printing offices, etc." In addition, "in order to give the BSR immediate assistance in respect to current necessities, the RSFSR lends to the BSR an unredeemable subsidy," *i.e.*, grants funds which need not be repaid.¹⁷

It must be recalled that Bokhara did not finally join the U.S. S.R. until 1924, and that the Socialist Soviet Republic of Central Russia was having difficulties of the most serious kind at the time these agreements were entered into. But there is no doubt that the application of the Leninist national policy hastened the "differentiation of classes" in Bokhara, helped to mature the revolution there, and influenced the country towards federation with the Union.

The objection that "self-determination is impossible under

capitalism and unnecessary under socialism" merely serves as a cloak for hiding the rejection of national liberation of the Negroes.

Especially by those who do not, or do not care to, understand the national nature of the Negro question or the Communist program, self-determination for the Negro has been called segregationism, inverted Jim-Crow, Red nationalism, etc. The Communists have been charged with "catering to Negro chauvinism," with intensifying Negro nationalism, with "inciting race riots." These charges, we must say again, are nothing new in the history of the national question. They have been applied with as much heat against the revolutionary Marxists in the past with regard to other national situations: By the followers of Proudhon against Karl Marx and the First International when that organization projected the slogan "Resistance to Russian Encroachment upon Europe—Restoration of Poland!" Again, against Karl Marx by Bakunin when Marx declared for the independence of Ireland as a necessary condition for the liberation of the English working class. Against Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks when they proclaimed in their program "the right of all nations which are now part of the Russian state freely to separate and to form independent states."

The objections have been more familiar under the form: larger states are progressive, smaller states encourage nationalism, separatism among the working class, are a hindrance to internationalism and therefore to the final aim of socialism. To which Lenin has always replied: true, but internationalism, the free amalgamation of the peoples of the world cannot be achieved by annexation, by forced assimilation, but must be free in the fullest sense of the word, must be established on the basis of equality and voluntarily. "No nation can be free which oppresses another nation." The real test of internationalism for the proletariat of an oppressing nation is its readiness to struggle for the independence of the oppressed peoples, *i. e.*, for the right of self-determination. The real test of internationalism for the proletariat of the oppressed people is the struggle against bourgeois nationalism and for unity with the proletariat of the oppressing nation. This is Marxism, this is internationalism in the national question.

To charge the Communists with favoring Jim-Crowism because they advance the slogan of self-determination for the Negroes, displays surprising superficiality and ignorance even of the meaning of segregation. We have already shown that the creation of a Negro Republic in the South and the exercising of the right of self-determination is neither segregation nor Jim-Crowism, *i.e.*, it is not the setting up of a purely Negro state, under Negro domination. It is the outcome of an historical process, founded on the basic economic-social structure of the South and the climax of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the South.

On the other hand, the very essence of segregation as it appears in the United States is *force*. The Negroes live in their ghettos, they do not go to white restaurants, they do not generally intermarry with whites, they send their children to Jim-Crow schools and ride in special sections of street cars and railroad cars in the South, not because they prefer to do so. Segregation and Jim-Crow is a part of the whole social-superstructure through which Yankee imperialism oppresses the Negroes. It bears the mark of "inferiority," of degradation, of insult—the Negro is not "fit" to associate with whites, he is a human of a lower species, therefore he must be segregated, humiliated by a *cordon sanitaire*. This is the essence of segregation. It is *imposed by force*, upon the Negro people by the more powerful, dominating nation.

The principle of self-determination has none of these elements, it is diametrically opposed to the undemocratic practice of segregation. Above all, it removes this element of force, which renders segregation oppressive and humiliating, and establishes the basis of a free choice. It has nothing in common with bourgeois nationalist schemes and utopias which accept for their basis the prejudices and limitations set by imperialism, such as the Back-to-Africa movement, or the creation of a "49th state" to which Negroes may withdraw. Even if a Negro Republic choose separation from a Soviet United States, such free separation is a thousand times better than either forced annexation or forced segregation. For such a separation would be voluntary, would be a step still proven to be essential before even federation could be realized. Better to go through a num-

ber of steps—even if these steps involve separation—as long as each step is really free, without any elements of force on the part of the whites, than to have even an iota or a suspicion of forceful assimilation in the process of amalgamation of the peoples.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

BLACK BELT AND BORDER COUNTIES

DISTRICT 1

MARYLAND

Black Belt: Calvert, Charles, St. Mays.

Border: Prince George, Anne Arundel, Kent, Queen Anne, Caroline, Talbot, Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester.

VIRGINIA

Black Belt: Amelia, Brunswick, Caroline, Charles City, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Essex, Goochland, Greensville, Isle of Wight, James City, King and Queen, Mecklenburg, Nansemond, New Kent, Northampton, Powhatan, Prince Edward, Southampton, Surry, Sussex.

Border: Accomac, Charlotte, Chesterfield, Elizabeth City, Gloucester, Halifax, Hanover, Henrico, King William, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Mathews, Middlesex, Norfolk, Northumberland, Nottoway, Prince George, Princess Anne, Richmond, Warwick Westmoreland, York, King George, Spottsylvania, Appotomax, Campbell, Pittsylvania, Louisa, Fluvanna, Buckingham.

NORTH CAROLINA

Black Belt: Perquimans, Hertford Bertie, Northampton, Halifax, Warren, Edgecombe, Camden, Currituck, Chowan, Franklin, Gates, Granville, Nash, Pasquotank, Vance.

Border: Caswell, Person.

DISTRICT 2

NORTH CAROLINA

Black Belt: Bladen, Craven, Cumberland, Duplin, Jones, Lenoir, Martin, Pender, Greene, Pitt, Sampson, Washington, Wayne, Wilson.

Border: Orange, Durham, Alamance, Chatham, Wake, Johnston, Harnett, Lee, Moore, Montgomery, Stanley, Cabarrus, Union, Mecklenburg, Gaston, Cleveland, Tyrell, Dare, Hyde, Beaufort, Pamlico, Carteret, Onslow, New Hanover, Brunswick, Columbus.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Border: Cherokee, Spartanburg, Greenville, Anderson, Pickens, Oconee, Horry.

DISTRICT 3

NORTH CAROLINA

Black Belt: Hoke, Scotland, Anson, Robeson, Richmond.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Black Belt: Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Chester, Clarendon, Colleton, Darlington, Dorchester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Georgetown, Hampton, Jasper, Kershaw, Lee, McCormick, Marion, Marlboro, Orangeburg, Sumter, Williamsburg, Abbeville, Aiken, Dillon, Chesterfield, Florence, Greenwood, Lancaster, Laurens, Lexington, Newberry, Richland, Saluda, Union, York.

THE NEGRO QUESTION

GEORGIA

Black Belt: Baker, Brooks, Burke, Calhoun, Camden, Clay, Columbia, Crawford, Decatur, Dooly, Daugherty, Early, Greene, Hancock, Harris, Henry, Houston, Jasper, Jefferson, Jenkins, Jones, Lee, Liberty, Lincoln, McDuffie, McIntosh, Macon, Marion, Meriwether, Mitchell, Monroe, Morgan, Oglethorpe, Peach, Pike, Pulaski, Putnam, Quitman, Randolph, Schley, Screven, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, Taliaffero, Terrell, Twiggs, Warren, Washington, Webster, Wilkes, Bryan, Butts, Chatham, Chattahoochie, Krisp, Effingham, Elbert, Glascock, Glyn, Grady, Lowndes, Muscgee, Richmond, Taylor, Thomas, Troup, Upson, Wilcox, Wilkinson, Worth.

Border: Hart, Spalding, Franklin, Madison, Clarke, Jackson, Bartow, Oconee, Walton, Rockdale, Newton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, Fulton, Clayton, Fayette, Campbell, Coweta, Douglas, Carroll, Heard, Tatnall, Toombs, Montgomery, Wheeler, Telfair, Ben Hill, Turner, Irwin, Tift, Berrien, Cook, Lanier, Clinch, Ware, Charlton, Brantley, Pierce, Wayne, Appling, Jeff Davis, Coffee, Atkinson, Bacon, Treutlin, Candler, Evans, Dodge, Bleibly, Laurens, Johnson, Bullock, Emanuel, Colquitt, Long.

FLORIDA

Black Belt: Gadsden, Leon, Jefferson, Madison.

Border: Duval, Baker, Clay, Bradford, Union, Putnam, Alachus, Marion, Levy, Dixie, Gilchrist, Taylor, Lafayette, Swanee, Columbia, Nassau, Hamilton, Wakulla.

DISTRICT 4

ALABAMA

Black Belt: Autauga, Barbour, Bullock, Choctaw, Clarke, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Russell, Sumter, Wilcox, Butler, Chambers, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Elmore, Henry, Pickens, Pike, Talapoosa, Washington.

Border: Randolph, Clay, Talledega, Shelby, Jefferson, Walker, Fayette, Lamar, Chilton, Bibb, Tuscaloosa, Houston, Dale, Coffee, Geneva, Covington, Escambia, Baldwin, Mobile.

MISSISSIPPI

Black Belt: Chickasaw, Clay, Kemper, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Clarke, Jasper, Lauderdale, Monroe, Neshoba, Newton, Winston.

Border: Itawamba, Lee, Pontotok, Union, Tippah, Choctaw, Webster, Calhoun, Greene, George, Jackson, Harrison, Stone, Perry, Jones, Smith, Covington, Lamar, Forest, Pearl River, Hancock, Wayne, Simpson, Marion.

FLORIDA

Border: Franklin, Liberty, Gulf, Calhoun, Jackson, Bay, Washington, Holmes, Walton, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Escambia.

GEORGIA

Border: Miller, Seminole.

LOUISIANA

Border: St. Tammany, Washington, Tangipahoa, Livingston.

DISTRICT 5

ARKANSAS

Black Belt: Crittenden, Chicot, Desha, Jefferson, Lee, Lincoln, Monroe, Phillip, St. Francis, Ashley, Cross, Drew, Woodruff.

TENNESSEE

Black Belt: Haywood, Fayette, Tipton, Shelby.

LOUISIANA

Black Belt: Concordia, East Carroll, E. Feliciana, Iberville, Madison, Point Coupee, Morehouse, Richland, St. Helena, Tensas W. Baton Route, W. Feliciana, Ascension, Assumption, East Baton Rouge, Franklin, Iberia, Lafayette, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, West Carroll.

MISSISSIPPI

Black Belt: Adams, Amite, Bolivar, Carroll, Claiborne Coahoma, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Leflore, Marshall, Madison, Panola, Quitman, Rankin, Sharkey, Sunflower, DeSots, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunico, Warren, Washington, Wilkinson, Yazoo, Attala, Benton, Copiah, Franklin, Lawrence, Leake, Lincoln, Lafayette, Montgomery, Pike, Scott, Walthall, Yalobusha.

DISTRICT 6

ARKANSAS

Black Belt: Lafayette, Columbia.

Border: Mississippi, Prairie, Loanoke, Pulaski, Grant, Hot Spring, Clark, Pike, Howard, Sevier, Arkansas, Cleveland, Dallas, Little River, Miller, Hempstead, Nevada, Ouachita, Calhoun, Bradley, Union.

LOUISIANA

Black Belt: Bossier, Claiborne, DeSoto, Natchitoches, Bienville, Caddo, Lincoln, Red River, Ouachita, Union, Webster.

Border: Jefferson, La Fourche, Terrebonne, Sabine, Vernon, Avoyelles, Evangeline, Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Jeff Davis, Arcadia, Vermillion, Cameron, Catahoula, Rapides, Grant, LaSalle, Winn, Caldwell, Jackson.

TEXAS

Black Belt: Marion, Gregg, Harrison, Panola, Rusk.

Border: Bowie, Cass, Morris, Camp, Upshur, Smith, Cherokee, Anderson, Freestone, Limestone, Navarro, Henderson, Robertson, Leon, Houston, Angelino, Nacogdoches, Shelby, San Augustine, Sabine, Newton, Jasper, Tyler, Polk, Trinity, Orange, Jefferson, Hardin, Chambers, Liberty, San Jacinto, Walker, Montgomery, Harris, Galveston, Brazoria, Matagorda, Wharton, Ft. Bend, Waller, Austin, Colorado, Washington, Burlington, Brazos, Grimes, Madison.

TENNESSEE

Border: Lauderdale, Madison, Hardeman.

APPENDIX II. POPULATION
 TABLE I.—POPULATION OF THE BLACK BELT BY REGION, 1860-1930

<i>1930</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>ALL</i>
<i>District</i>							
Total	1,529,449	441,340	2,789,965	1,190,293	2,976,980	597,938	9,525,865
Negro	668,665	189,698	1,440,246	658,927	1,544,745	287,968	4,790,049
% Negro	43.7	43.0	51.6	55.4	51.9	48.1	50.3
<i>1920</i>							
Total	1,477,032	378,844	2,868,536	1,127,279	2,616,306	500,135	8,968,132
Negro	673,403	166,562	650,216	1,449,420	2,447,778	4,806,565	4,806,565
% Negro	45.6	43.8	56.5	57.7	55.4	48.9	53.6
<i>1910</i>							
Total	1,279,517	323,516	2,644,118	1,179,253	2,528,240	433,318	8,387,958
Negro	629,007	145,972	1,608,388	736,709	1,485,663	236,957	4,842,766
% Negro	49.2	45.1	60.6	62.6	58.8	54.7	57.7
<i>1900</i>							
Total	1,129,094	283,987	2,367,516	1,133,881	2,199,687	384,735	7,498,900
Negro	589,925	128,997	1,477,780	722,926	1,346,792	222,571	4,488,991
% Negro	52.2	45.4	62.4	63.8	61.2	57.8	59.9
<i>1890</i>							
Total	1,012,141	248,922	2,067,972	979,300	1,840,680	316,292	6,465,307
Negro	543,849	114,915	1,297,074	618,822	1,106,392	185,740	3,866,792
% Negro	53.7	46.1	62.7	63.1	60.1	58.7	59.8
<i>1880</i>							
Total	941,891	231,607	1,825,229	907,180	1,583,997	260,506	5,750,410
Negro	530,802	?	1,148,902	580,223	936,635	153,609	3,466,924
% Negro	56.3	?	62.9	64.0	59.1	59.0	60.3
<i>1870</i>							
Total	770,331	170,324	1,388,895	740,021	1,170,893	191,133	4,431,597
Negro	427,613	80,678	846,468	453,986	644,306	107,212	2,560,263
% Negro	55.5	47.4	60.9	61.3	55.2	56.0	57.8
<i>1860</i>							
Total	777,727	158,172	1,462,484	693,578	1,116,130	160,918	4,362,000
Negro	430,771	74,143	845,959	404,437	624,114	81,675	2,461,099
% Negro	55.9	46.9	57.8	58.3	55.9	50.7	56.4

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APPENDIX II

TABLE 2.—POPULATION OF THE BORDER TERRITORY BY REGION, 1860-1930
(In thousands)

<i>1930</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>I-A</i>	<i>I-B</i>	<i>II-A</i>	<i>II-B</i>	<i>III-A</i>	<i>III-B</i>	<i>IV-A</i>	<i>IV-B</i>	<i>IV-C</i>	<i>VI-A</i>	<i>VI-B</i>	<i>VI-C</i>	<i>VI-D</i>	<i>ALL</i>
Total	283	253	242	908	206	643	750	481	757	346	644	1,488	135	79	6,937
Negro	77	83	86	254	66	205	286	138	267	98	207	431	55	21	2,192
% Negro	27.7	32.8	35.7	28.0	32.1	31.9	38.0	28.7	35.1	28.3	32.2	29.0	40.9	26.0	31.6
<i>1920</i>															
Total	252	126	126	775	188	569	647	409	645	313	567	1,216	114	80	6,001
Negro	81	90	90	239	65	191	263	138	203	97	203	391	49	26	2,033
% Negro	32.3	39.8	39.8	30.8	34.7	33.5	40.6	32.4	31.4	31.3	35.8	32.1	43.3	32.6	33.9
<i>1900</i>															
Total	241	209	209	643	160	444	466	272	492	209	470	1,002	98	69	4,776
Negro	85	95	95	213	57	161	198	92	156	64	171	347	45	25	1,708
% Negro	35.1	45.5	45.5	33.2	35.3	36.3	42.4	33.7	31.7	30.7	36.3	34.6	46.5	36.0	35.8
<i>1890</i>															
Total	218	204	204	509	138	361	315	189	386	137	388	719	82	55	3,703
Negro	81	101	101	173	53	133	126	64	166	41	144	291	37	24	1,383
% Negro	36.9	49.4	49.4	33.9	38.0	36.9	40.0	34.1	30.2	29.8	37.0	40.5	45.4	43.2	37.4
<i>1880</i>															
Total	207	197	197	421	120	294	211	146	273	97	285	560	76	49	2,935
Negro	81	104	104	150	48	109	80	52	74	31	107	226	34	24	1,121
% Negro	44.2	52.7	52.7	35.4	40.4	37.2	38.1	35.4	27.0	31.7	37.7	40.4	44.1	49.1	38.0
<i>1870</i>															
Total	177	153	153	305	98	211	145	119	190	69	168	372	56	45	2,108
Negro	71	80	80	101	39	74	58	40	50	21	64	157	21	24	803
% Negro	40.3	52.2	52.2	33.2	40.3	35.2	39.7	36.8	26.5	30.3	38.0	42.3	38.3	50.3	38.1
<i>1860</i>															
Total	168	160	160	279	85	165	106	112	202	57	157	316	51	42	1,899
Negro	75	85	85	87	34	54	37	31	55	19	56	131	22	19	705
% Negro	44.6	53.2	53.2	31.2	40.1	42.6	35.0	27.6	27.3	33.2	35.7	41.6	42.8	45.3	37.1

APPENDIX II

TABLE 3.—RATE OF INCREASE, WHITE AND NEGRO POPULATION IN BLACK BELT, 1860-1930

Districts	I		II		III		IV		V		VI		ALL	
	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N
Decade														
1920-30	7.1	-0.7	18.5	13.9	8.2	-11.2	11.4	1.3	22.7	6.6	21.5	17.6	13.8	-0.3
1910-20	23.6	7.0	19.6	14.1	20.3	8.6	7.8	-11.7	11.9	-2.4	30.0	3.3	17.4	-0.7
1900-10	20.6	6.6	14.6	13.2	16.4	8.8	7.7	1.9	22.2	10.3	21.0	6.5	17.8	7.9
1890-00	15.1	8.5	15.7	12.3	15.4	14.	14.0	16.8	16.1	21.7	24.2	19.8	15.8	16.1
1880-90	13.9	2.4	16.7	?	13.9	12.9	10.3	6.7	13.4	18.1	22.2	20.9	13.8	11.5
1870-80	20.0	24.1	28.1	?	14.7	35.7	14.3	27.8	21.0	45.2	27.4	43.2	22.0	35.4
1860-70	0.1	-0.1	6.7	8.8	12.0	0.0	-0.1	12.3	7.0	3.2	5.9	31.2	-1.5	3.0

Allowing for the undercounts admitted by the Census Bureau, the rate of increase is much higher than that shown in the table for the decade 1860-70 for both the white and Negro populations, and lower for 1870-1880; higher for the Negro in 1880-1890 and 1910-1920, and lower for 1890-1900 and 1920-1930.

APPENDIX II

TABLE 4.—RATE OF INCREASE, WHITE AND NEGRO POPULATION IN BORDER TERRITORY, 1860-1930

Districts	I-A		I-B		II-A		II-B		III-A		III-B		IV-A	
	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N
Decade														
1920-30	14.6	-1.1	9.6	-3.8	35.4	21.1	13.3	9.8	17.7	-0.7	16.4	-2.7	16.8	5.2
1910-20	5.4	-4.5	14.3	-4.0	22.0	6.0	14.0	14.0	15.7	7.7	20.8	8.7	24.7	3.3
1900-10	9.2	-3.7	19.3	-5.5	24.7	12.0	18.5	18.5	33.3	18.1	43.0	33.1	50.8	45.2
1890-00	13.3	5.0	10.6	-5.5	27.7	23.1	21.0	21.0	24.6	21.2	42.4	56.7	45.0	43.0
1880-90	9.9	-1.2	10.0	-3.0	24.3	15.1	20.1	20.1	23.4	21.9	45.2	57.4	32.1	24.6
1870-80	18.8	14.2	27.6	29.8	33.1	47.9	22.0	22.7	35.1	47.2	47.9	39.2	20.5	27.6
1860-70	13.2	-5.2	-1.1	-5.9	6.0	16.3	14.9	13.1	22.9	38.1	26.6	54.7	3.3	31.4
Districts	IV-B		IV-C		VI-A		VI-B		VI-C		VI-D		ALL	
Decade	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N
1920-30	29.1	4.8	18.7	20.0	13.8	6.9	26.0	13.2	30.0	13.0	38.3	5.1	22.6	7.6
1910-20	10.8	31.8	14.7	1.2	20.2	1.9	28.3	10.1	23.1	12.2	8.6	-21.0	20.0	7.9
1900-10	31.6	30.3	49.2	51.5	21.5	19.0	25.7	12.9	23.8	8.5	22.4	4.7	29.3	19.0
1890-00	24.5	33.6	50.1	57.0	22.4	18.6	53.2	19.2	16.6	22.3	39.4	0.3	32.3	23.5
1880-90	35.3	57.7	45.5	33.0	38.0	34.2	28.2	28.6	5.4	10.7	25.8	-0.9	27.8	23.4
1870-80	42.9	46.6	37.4	46.1	70.1	68.1	55.7	43.7	22.9	55.6	18.9	1.3	39.0	39.6
1860-70	-5.0	-8.6	27.2	11.3	3.4	14.0	16.0	19.8	18.9	-1.1	-7.3	27.0	9.3	13.8

APPENDIX II

TABLE 5.—DISTRIBUTION OF THE NEGRO POPULATION, 1860-1930

Year	U. S.	Black Belt		Border		South Other Territory		Non-South	
		Black Belt	%	Border Territory	%	South Other Territory	%	Non-South	%
1930	11,891,143	4,790,049	40.3	2,358,302	19.8	1,627,493	13.8	3,115,299	26.1
1920	10,463,131	4,806,565	45.7	2,192,457	21.0	1,411,183	13.5	2,052,926	19.6
1910	9,827,763	4,842,766	49.3	2,032,773	20.7	1,379,266	14.0	1,572,958	16.0
1900	8,833,994	4,488,991	50.8	1,608,411	18.2	1,410,978	16.0	1,328,614	15.0
1890	7,488,676	3,866,742	51.6	1,373,471	18.3	1,169,608	15.6	1,078,855	14.4
1880	6,380,793	3,466,924	52.7	1,120,844	17.0	1,042,356	15.8	950,669	14.4
1870	4,880,009	2,560,263	52.5	802,617	16.4	749,837	16.3	722,292	14.8
1860	4,441,830	2,461,099	55.4	705,095	15.8	673,223	15.1	602,413	13.6

APPENDIX III. TENURE
TABLE 1.—NEGRO AND WHITE TENANCY IN BLACK BELT AND BORDER TERRITORY, BY REGIONS, 1910-1930

	1910			1920			1930		
	Total Tenants	Negro Tenants	%	Total Tenants	Negro Tenants	%	Total Tenants	Negro Tenants	%
<i>Black Belt</i>									
I	45,553	25,037	55.0	49,304	29,254	51.2	53,247	32,148	60.3
II	19,094	9,306	48.7	26,199	14,011	53.5	30,312	13,939	46.0
III	20,484	15,235	74.6	221,440	163,794	74.0	167,614	113,826	67.9
IV	125,984	101,622	80.7	100,005	78,448	78.4	106,906	80,720	75.5
V	215,418	178,210	82.7	228,647	189,747	82.9	281,419	217,468	77.3
VI	29,718	22,301	75.0	36,049	27,064	75.1	50,056	35,743	71.4
Total	640,351	488,819	76.3	661,404	602,413	75.9	689,581	493,844	71.6
<i>Border Territory</i>									
I-A	6,779	1,453	21.4	6,483	1,915	29.5	5,492	1,404	25.6
I-B	8,561	3,541	41.4	9,148	3,846	42.0	10,839	4,273	39.4
II-A	45,295	18,968	44.8	47,010	19,458	41.4	52,029	19,016	36.5
II-B	4,840	1,775	36.7	5,185	2,188	42.2	7,678	2,184	28.4
III-A	33,439	15,763	47.1	39,804	17,179	43.2	32,057	10,000	31.2
III-B	26,808	11,434	42.6	36,276	15,795	43.5	37,689	11,004	29.4
IV-A	13,772	4,256	31.0	17,867	4,685	26.2	21,690	4,727	21.8
IV-B	31,897	10,481	32.9	30,052	8,981	29.9	37,727	10,210	27.3
IV-C	7,262	2,761	38.0	7,460	2,736	36.7	13,594	4,691	34.6
VI-A	32,865	16,547	50.3	38,132	18,389	48.2	46,088	21,074	45.7
VI-B	61,272	27,080	44.2	70,080	30,867	44.0	94,190	37,442	39.8
VI-C	10,085	5,887	58.4	12,632	7,564	59.9	16,980	9,313	55.4
VI-D	805	79	9.8	868	68	7.8	644	56	8.7
Total	283,680	120,025	47.3	321,006	133,671	41.3	376,698	135,394	36.0

APPENDIX III

TABLE 2.—NEGRO TENURE IN BLACK BELT, BY REGIONS, 1910-1930

	Farm Operators	Tenants and Croppers	% of Operators	Tenants	% of Operators	Croppers	% of Operators	Owners and Part Owners	% of Operators
<i>I</i>									
1910	52,084	25,037	48.1					27,047	51.9
1920	56,176	29,254	52.1					26,922	47.9
1925	62,951	35,044	55.7	19,790	31.4	15,254	24.2	27,907	44.3
1930	54,008	32,148	59.5	16,491	30.5	15,657	29.0	21,860	40.5
<i>II</i>									
1910	14,277	9,306	65.2					4,971	34.8
1920	18,916	14,011	74.6					4,905	25.4
1925	19,128	14,333	74.9	6,014	31.4	8,319	43.5	4,795	25.1
1930	18,600	13,939	74.9	4,424	23.7	9,515	51.2	4,661	25.1
<i>III</i>									
1910	186,508	152,353	81.7					34,155	19.3
1920	197,583	163,794	82.9					33,789	17.1
1925	150,202	122,576	74.6	59,797	39.8	62,779	41.8	27,626	18.4
1930	137,963	113,826	80.7	53,682	38.9	60,144	43.6	24,137	17.5
<i>IV</i>									
1910	118,676	101,622	85.6					17,054	14.4
1920	94,738	78,448	83.0					16,290	17.0
1925	84,976	70,757	83.3	44,873	52.8	25,884	30.5	14,219	16.7
1930	97,124	80,720	83.1	52,330	53.8	28,390	29.3	16,404	16.9
<i>V</i>									
1910	204,287	178,210	87.2					26,077	12.8
1920	216,063	189,747	87.8					26,316	12.2
1925	195,053	174,485	89.4	63,054	32.4	111,431	57.0	20,568	10.6
1930	240,532	217,468	90.4	80,536	33.5	136,932	56.9	23,064	9.6
<i>VI</i>									
1910	31,567	22,301	70.6					9,266	29.5
1920	36,776	27,064	73.6					9,712	26.4
1925	36,475	28,448	78.0	14,345	39.3	14,103	38.7	8,027	22.0
1930	44,640	35,743	80.1	15,776	35.4	19,967	44.7	8,897	19.9

TABLE 3.—TENANCY IN BLACK BELT, BY REGIONS, 1880-1890

	1880			1890		
	Cash Renters	Share Renters	Total Tenants	Cash Renters	Share Renters	Total Tenants
I.....	11,632	17,333	28,965	11,521	17,989	29,510
II.....	1,675	7,450	9,125	1,615	7,807	9,422
III.....	38,906	43,791	82,643	56,936	58,001	114,947
IV.....	22,416	28,389	50,805	39,959	29,286	68,845
V.....	23,969	28,496	52,465	38,150	46,652	84,802
VI.....	2,588	6,180	8,768	4,161	10,963	15,124
Total.....	101,186	131,639	232,825	151,942	170,708	322,650

TABLE 4.—WHITE AND NEGRO TENANCY IN BLACK BELT, BY REGIONS, 1900

	CASH TENANTS		%	SHARE TENANTS		%
	Total	Negro		Negro	Total	
I.....	17,385	10,638	61.2	26,049	14,134	54.3
II.....	2,844	1,290	45.4	12,615	6,396	50.7
III.....	103,865	75,110	73.3	57,963	42,978	74.1
IV.....	73,074	61,205	83.8	31,827	23,388	73.4
V.....	92,746	75,458	81.4	78,004	66,050	84.7
VI.....	9,135	7,089	77.6	18,730	14,205	75.8
Total.....	299,049	230,790	77.2	225,188	167,151	74.2

APPENDIX IV
 COTTON GINNED IN BLACK BELT AND BORDER TERRITORY,
 BT REGION, 1930

(Number of Bales Ginned to December 13)

	<u>Black Belt</u>	<u>Border Territory</u>
REGION I		
Virginia	37,996	1,314
Maryland .....		.....
North Carolina	<u>149,540</u>	.....
	187,536	1,314
REGION II		
North Carolina	116,556	261,231
South Carolina	<u>265,819</u>	<u>2,065</u>
	382,375	263,296
REGION III		
Florida	8,601	7,764
Georgia	699,434	605,771
North Carolina	120,569	.....
South Carolina	<u>711,101</u>	.....
	1,539,705	613,535
REGION IV		
Alabama	541,558	358,621
Mississippi	192,704	216,333
Florida .....	.....	30,014
Georgia .....	.....	16,740
Louisiana	<u>.....</u>	<u>16,398</u>
	734,262	638,106
REGION V		
Arkansas	313,544	.....
Louisiana	269,849	.....
Mississippi	941,013	.....
Tennessee	<u>88,318</u>	.....
	1,612,724	.....
REGION VI		
Arkansas	24,965	257,467
Louisiana	235,663	169,643
Texas	89,628	842,536
Tennessee	<u>.....</u>	<u>59,470</u>
	350,256	1,329,116
Total	<u>4,806,858</u>	<u>2,845,367</u>

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