



**ENDING
"THE
DARK
NIGHT
OF
SLAVERY"**

DÂN-QUÂN VIỆT-NAM

on others is an institutionalized condition throughout the colonial world, and can only be overcome by finally ending “the dark night of slavery” with proletarian class ideology. We remember that Stephen Biko said before his assassination:

“The Black man is subjected to two forces in this country. He is first of all oppressed by an external world through institutionalized machinery and through laws that restrict him from doing certain things, through heavy work conditions, through poor education. These are all external to him. Secondly, and this we regard as the most important, the Black man in himself has developed a certain state of alienation ... Because of the ability of the white culture to solve so many problems ... You tend to look at it as a superior culture to yours. You tend to despise the **worker culture**, and this inculcates in the Black man a sense of **self-hatred ...**”

Defeatism is **colonial** in that it is an oppressor nation view, an alien, imperialist view, rather than one that reflects the natural reality and interests of the oppressed nation. But it is simultaneously a class question. Defeatism represents the subjective and vacillating class nature of the neo-colonial petty-bourgeois, who are its social carriers. The neo-colonial petty-bourgeois are also drawn towards defeatism because of their own material reality as a class. They cannot overcome imperialism by themselves. **They are not the revolutionary class, the element of change.** In the modern age only the proletariat is the bearer of revolutionary science, of correct strategy for liberation of all the oppressed. Malcolm grasped the essence of this when he pointed out that only the grassroots provided rebellion, change, while the petty-bourgeois Black leadership always trailed ineffectually behind them.

Published in *False Nationalism False Internationalism: Class Contradictions in the Armed Struggle*, by E. Tani & Kaé Sera, 1985

Cover: Viet Minh poster, 1954

to which we can escape, develop resources, repair our engines, and then return to attack our enemies. So, therefore, we had to create the mountain. From various utterances and signs of solidarity that we received from North American left forces in San Francisco, California, and from the evidence of the material resources that we could see here, we could see the ... possibility for creating our mountain here. We perceived the possibility of being able to bring leading Party forces to the San Francisco area, whose primary responsibility would be to develop unity with the North American forces in this area ... That's why we are in San Francisco, to build the mountain."

White folks are said to be the Mountain. White folks are said to be the rear base area for the Black Revolution. National offices are moved several thousand miles, across the continent, in order to get closer to them. They are all-important. **Once again, white people are said to be the answer to the problems of the New Afrikan Nation.** And the thing is, that everyone who does that also adds that they are only carrying out **Malcolm's** legacy. Is that what Malcolm did?

Intervention by euro-amerikans in the affairs of the New Afrikan Nation is not a trick, played by sly white people on innocent New Afrikan leaders. Intervention is not a trick, but rather a relationship, an **alliance** between similar class forces in oppressed and oppressor nations. Some leaders, as we can see, are not innocent at all. They look for intervention, argue and recruit for intervention, and defend their cherished intervention as "allies" and "solidarity." Of course, when their schemes go wrong they simply blame it all on white folks. This has nothing to do with liking oppressors. After all, the drug addict may hate their addiction, but still find themselves going back to the Man for one more fix. This is not the fault of one leader or a hundred leaders as individuals. Defeatism and an attitude of dependence

ENDING "THE DARK NIGHT OF SLAVERY"

In the beginning of the revolutionary crisis, the Black Nation found itself in a period where revolution was an objective possibility, but wherein false and primitive theories of **how** to get liberation led to setback after setback. This has not only been true for all other revolutionary movements in the continental Empire, but true for many other nations as well.

Even in Vietnam, which has been among the advanced guard in the World Revolution, what they call "the dark night of slavery" lasted close to seventy years. During those years the Vietnamese people heroically fought many battles, launched many uprisings, began many new revolutionary organizations. Only to be defeated time after time by the French colonial armies who had first invaded Vietnam in 1858. From 1885–1892 a series of local armed uprisings led by feudal intellectuals from the old ruling classes were defeated.

This led to a new trend, of looking abroad for new ways and in some cases for foreign help. Some Vietnamese tried to organize for bourgeois democracy on the French model, only to be repressed. Others pinned their hopes on the French Left taking over and decolonizing. Still others joined the Chinese bourgeois nationalist movement (Guomindang) and hoped that an independent China would free their country. Still others looked to Japan, as a new Asian power thought to be sympathetic on race lines. Others looked to the u.s. for help, as a world power supposedly democratic and verbally critical of european colonialism.

In all cases, these many movements and organizations guided by unscientific theories about how to free their country met

defeat year after year. It was not until Vietnamese communism began that the anti-colonial movement could work out a correct strategy. As the history of the Vietnamese Party notes: "... prior to 1920, no Vietnamese patriot had found out the light of national liberation in the dark night of slavery, neither was any patriotic, revolutionary organization capable of leading the people to victory. At this period, the Vietnamese revolution was faced with a grave crisis as regards the way to national salvation."

Even the very self-reliant Vietnamese, at a confused stage in their history, looked heavily to others as the bearers of liberation. There was also much defeatism in these earlier periods, when repeated setbacks and other inadequacies had demoralized many. In particular this was true among the privileged Vietnamese classes, who were predisposed to be awed at European colonial power since they profited so much relatively within its occupation. Many petty-bourgeois Vietnamese preached that the French were just too strong for the small and weak Vietnamese nation to fight—better to seek reforms within the colonial system.

All this has certain parallels to the political situation within the New Afrikan liberation movement. This has manifested itself even within the armed organizations. The main problem facing the New Afrikan Nation today, as all other oppressed peoples in the Empire, is the inability to find the correct path to liberation, and thus end "the dark night of slavery."

The most prevalent backward idea in the New Afrikan Liberation Movement has been defeatism. **Every national liberation movement has had to overcome this backward political position.** Even in China, the largest and one of the oldest nations on the earth, the Communists in the 1930s had to constantly fight defeatism among the people, among the national movement, and even among the army. Mao called this backward idea "the theory

"That was a real critical move at that time. The Party was heavily dependent on that money from the solidarity committee. The whole publication of the Party newspaper, *The Burning Spear*, depended on it. The solidarity committee also subsidized an entire African bookstore and the entire office rent and living space (the same building) of the national office.

"When it really slapped us in the face, it was totally unbelievable. Here were these white women going to take all this money ... the Party work came to a halt. There was nothing we could do. We had planned to publish a special issue of *The Burning Spear* to explain the whole struggle, but then we couldn't."

It is really striking to hear a New Afrikan activist say that without Euro-American approval they were unable to even communicate with their own Nation, much less maintain an organization! False internationalism worked to produce a dependent mentality. There is no doubt that Euro-American "allies" were the central consideration for the APSP. Chairman Yeshitela was unafraid to publicly say that. He has explained that the APSP national office's move to San Francisco as motivated by the need to find Euro-Americans:

"It was a struggle that was complicated by the tremendous poverty of our Party and of our people, so that often our struggle was composed equally of attempts to feed the members who constitute our Party, as well as to do the other work. Often our struggle was complicated by the most ridiculous need to pay a light bill in the office, by the most obscene need to pay the rent ...

"The decision to come to San Francisco was partially influenced by these difficulties ... We understood that we needed a rear base area. There are no mountains within the colonial territory

Defeatism tugs at and undermines the liberation movement by slyly promoting the view that liberation can only come from others, in particular the old, colonized view that white people are the answer to the problems of the New Afrikan Nation. Revolutionary nationalists explicitly put down this idea. Yet, it isn't too hard to see it still lived on in disguised forms in the old '60s Movement. For example, the view was widespread that the New Afrikan revolution should be completely financed by contributions from liberal and radical euro-amerikans. New Afrikan people, it was claimed, were "too poor" to support their own Movement. We've all heard and read such things, and should admit what they mean.

Examples of this are not hard to find. For instance: in 1980 the African People's Socialist Party split. The split became a public controversy, with the majority of the Central Committee members led by Ajowa Ifateyo (sn Vicki Wells) and Aziza Ayoluwa expelling APSP Chairman Omali Yeshitela (sn Joseph Waller) on charges of alleged physical abuse of women. Yeshitela and his supporters, while not commenting on the specific events, counter-charged that the Ifateyo-Ayoluwa actions were part of a lesbian-f.b.i.-COINTELPRO repressive operation against Black people. We mention these issues only in passing, as background in a split in which the allegiance of euro-amerikan radical "allies" was very important.

The APSP had/has a euro-amerikan solidarity committee attached to it which played an all-important role inside the life of the organization. What that meant can be seen by the testimony of Ajowa Ifateyo. She has said in an interview that without the approval of this solidarity committee, which supported Chairman Yeshitela and withheld money from them, the majority of the APSP Central Committee was helpless, paralyzed:

of national subjugation." So folks constantly hear in a thousand different voices, direct and indirect, that New Afrikan people are too few, too weak, too outnumbered to be able to themselves directly fight and defeat the u.s. Empire. If New Afrikans foolishly dare to rise up then the vastly stronger White amerika will simply commit genocide and wipe all New Afrikans out. Therefore, the theory of national subjugation goes, New Afrikan people must limit their strategies to those that win majority white approval or at least tolerance.

In the political debate in the early 1960s over first picking up the gun, Robert Williams spoke against the Black integrationists/assimilationists directly to this crucial issue. Williams wrote in 1962 in *Negroes With Guns*:

"The responsible Negro leadership is pacifist in so far as its one interest is that we do not fight white racists; that we do not 'provoke' or enrage them. **They constantly tell us that if we resort to violent self-defense we will be exterminated** ...

"This fear of extermination is a myth which we've exposed in Monroe. We did this because we came to have an active understanding of the racist system, and we grasped the relationship between violence and racism. The existence of violence is at the very heart of a racist system ... When people say that they are opposed to Negroes 'resorting to violence' what they really mean is that they are opposed to Negroes defending themselves and challenging the exclusive monopoly of violence practiced by white racists ... When Afro-Americans resist and struggle for their rights they also possess a power greater than that generated by their will and hands. With the world situation as it is today, the most racist and fascist United States government conceivable could not

succeed in eliminating 20,000,000 people.”

It is significant that Williams’ political opponents, when pressed to explain how New Afrikans could protect themselves in a way that doesn’t antagonize White amerika, always fell back on the old, slavish idea that New Afrikans should look to white people—either the “white proletariat” or “concerned white liberals” or even the Federal government itself—as their protection. In other words, the oppressed should be dependent upon the oppressor. It is significant that those Blacks mentally enslaved by settler revisionism sounded no different from the upfront lackeys. One of the leading attackers against Williams and the armed self-defense movement was Claude Lightfoot, head of the “minority” department of the settler Communist Party USA, who also wrote in 1962:

“Another current to emerge recently is the movement around Williams, in Monroe, North Carolina. It also reflects a current born of desperation ...

“But it should be pointed out that armed struggle will not lead to Negro freedom. On the contrary, it would retard the fight for freedom because it would leave the struggle up to the Negroes alone. It is this tendency of ‘I’ll walk alone’ that underlies much of the confused direction the Williams forces advocate. But who else in America is prepared to take up arms for a cause—any cause?

“The main protection for Negroes in the South is to force the Federal Government to shoulder its responsibilities, as President Eisenhower was forced to do at Little Rock. This must be the direction. In this kind of struggle, we can muster allies throughout the country ...”

Consequently, when the New Afrikan urban guerrillas of the BLA swung into action in 1970–71, they found themselves quickly abandoned by the Black Movement. And not in any subtle way, either. New Afrikans as helpless victims and armed organization only for personal self-defense were acceptable to the Movement and its settler allies. The Black Movement refused to really support any of the urban guerrillas, either in deeds and for the most part even in words. New Afrikan guerrillas were not unaware of this, to say the least. In “Message to the Lumpen,” the young BLA said:

“... when the lumpen first posed the alternative to organized revolutionary violence of the ruling class, the lumpen found itself isolated ... The other classes panicked and got as far away from the lumpen as possible ... Now, while the world situation permits it we must make our move for the freedom and liberation of our people, realizing that nobody and nothing can stop us. To be successful, all we need to do is become fulltime revolutionaries. We have nothing better to do. No more of their programs for us ... Field niggers have dreamed of this day since the first slave revolt was drowned in blood in Babylon. It’s what haunts the dreams of every Indian alive.”

Yet what they discovered in practice was that most of the “Black Liberation Movement”—whether liberal, pseudo-nationalist, Black Power, phony “M-L” or phony “Pan-Afrikanist”—didn’t want armed struggle and was convinced that liberation couldn’t succeed. The urban guerrillas found that their own Movement was neither preparing the masses nor organizing for liberation. The vital relationship between the masses and the first seeds of armed revolutionary organization (necessarily small) had been cut—from within the Movement. Defeatism was a poison within the supposedly revolutionary “BLM.”

large Turkish Ottoman Empire. Today Turkey is no empire but only a small nation, itself an oppressed neo-colony. There is no law that says that the u.s. oppressor nation will continue to be a large nation. And there is no law that guarantees that New Afrika or Hawaii or the Navajo nation or any imperialist neo-colony will be independent in the future. This is up to the struggle, and up to the desires of the masses. Some peoples agree with Ho, that “Nothing is more precious than independence,” and some peoples do not agree.

The key link to grasp here is that Vietnam proved that a weak nation can defeat a strong nation, and a small nation can defeat a large nation. This has changed the course of world history. Why, then, cannot Puerto Rico or the Philippines or New Afrika or Azania defeat the u.s. oppressor nation? This exposes the assumption at the heart of defeatism within the New Afrikan liberation movement. Folks, even some professed nationalists, are still weak and hesitant about the New Afrikan Nation. They’re uncertain that it is a separate, legitimate Nation. Too many revs keep thinking, if only unconsciously, that New Afrikan people are only a “minority” within the “majority” settler u.s. oppressor nation. This “minority” thinking is strongly pushed by the oppressor, who always keeps labeling the oppressed as “minorities” **together** with euro-amerikan women. (If you listen to the oppressor, they are the “majority” even within the “minority.”) It’s easy to see how a “minority” within a nation might feel it impossible to win a war against its own “majority.” But between nations, as Vietnam and other liberation struggles have shown, political consciousness is a bigger factor in the balance of power than population size, industry, weaponry, or size of armies. A larger problem might be that many Third-World revs here, while wanting to get out of their oppression, don’t entirely want to separate from the “good life” of the “Big House.”

This kind of slavish nonsense was from someone who called himself a “communist,” but who had the kind of thinking 100% acceptable to imperialism. In general, the phony “Marxism-Leninism” practiced by petty-bourgeois careerists has always produced defeatism about New Afrikan liberation, however disguised. Robert L. Allen, for example, one of the leaders in the Black intellectual trend of Bourgeois “Marxism,” editor of *Black Scholar* magazine, even went so far as to lie and falsely praise Malcolm X for his supposed defeatism. Allen, who was for years a staff member for the white Left *Guardian* newspaper, became a professor of Black Studies at San Jose State University. Malcolm, Allen lied, recognized that only white support could save New Afrikan people from genocide, and therefore Malcolm was actually working to **prevent** New Afrikan revolution from breaking out:

“As far as white workers were concerned, he had no faith at all that they could be anything but reactionary and racist. With beliefs such as these, it would be natural for Malcolm to hesitate to advocate that Blacks undertake anything more than self-defense. His major concern, wisely, was to prevent genocide, not encourage it. He knew that in a revolutionary situation only the presence of revolutionary forces outside the Black communities could prevent mass slaughter of the Black population. He saw no such forces in evidence, and therefore was forced to equivocate ...”

In this unbelievable, lying rap, we are told (by a professor of Black Studies, of course) that Malcolm, too, believed that New Afrikan Revolution had to wait on the back burner. And not wait for anything New Afrikans might decide, no, wait for **white folks** to get ready to permit New Afrikan liberation! White people are again said to be the answer to the problems of the New Afrikan Nation. Well, if Malcolm X was so allegedly bent

on “equivocating” and holding back the Rev, why did the c.i.a. assassinate him?

We should start to see how important defeatism is, how it robs the liberation struggle of its independence, its hope for the masses, and its true vision of its tasks. It is not just liberalism and phony “M-Lism” that shelters defeatism. We can see this in phony “Pan-Afrikanism” as well. Pseudo-nationalists such as Stokely Carmichael have taken ideological refuge in a version of Pan-Afrikanism. This has allowed them to sound Afrikan-centered and nationalistic while still opposing any national independence for the oppressed right here. **I.e. this is militant integrationism disguised on a higher level.** Quite naturally, those who believe this also promote defeatism relabeled as realism. Stokely has been upfront in saying that revolution in the u.s. is a white thing, and New Afrikans must wait for revolution until the settler majority allows it (which would be a long wait indeed):

“For real socialist transformation to come to America, the white working class is the crucial element ... History has demonstrated to us the willingness of the Black man to work with his ally, the white working class ... Although the Black worker must be the vanguard, he must push the white worker out front. The Black worker must not move unless the white worker is moving.”

Again, we see across the political spectrum, among liberals, phony “M-L’ers,” phony “Pan-Afrikanists,” pseudo-nationalists, the same underlying politics: that New Afrikans will get genocidally wiped out if they push settler amerika too far, and that only “majority” white support can shield New Afrikan people. **In other words, that white people are the answer.**

We can easily expose the falsehoods in this ideological slavishness.

First, “the theory of national subjugation,” that New Afrikans are too weak and outnumbered to militarily fight the colonial power. Time and again we hear this as a truism, so supposedly obvious that it needs no explanation. When we examine it, however, it blows away into dust. For example, if Amilcar Cabral had all the rebel fighters in Guinea-Bissau (which is a small nation with a population less than some major cities) frontally mass and charge the Portuguese machine-guns, it might well have been true that the liberation struggle would have been totally wiped out. If General Giap had the whole Vietnamese liberation army expose themselves and charge u.s. bases, Saigon might be occupied right now. **But in fact People’s War by the weak and small nations won, while the imperialist NATO powers lost.**

But couldn’t the u.s. have used H-bombs, poison gas, and its industrial/technological power to commit total genocide and wipe out Vietnam? Abstractly, perhaps. In reality, no. As Mao pointed out in 1945, atomic weapons once demonstrated in Japan could no longer be used by u.s. imperialism against the Third World, since the people of the world would unite in horror against such dangerous barbarism. Hence, he said, their threat against China at that time was a “paper tiger.” In the same way, People’s War correctly fought uses many strategic factors, both military and political, to frustrate and immobilize the supposedly superior might of the imperialist nations.

This does not mean, of course, that any small or oppressed nation can automatically defeat any imperialist power. The dialectical process of constant change, of coming into being and going out of being, affects nations as well as other things. There are both many great empires and many small nations that have gone out of existence, just as many new nations are coming into being this century. Once the entire Arab world, which today comprises many sovereign nation-states, was one colony of the