

CHAPTER 1

Defining Self-Determination

Introduction

The issue of how nations will resolve their affairs and how subjugated people will govern their lives is the most paramount question of the day. According to *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1979, published by the Newspaper Enterprise Association, Incorporated,¹ the estimated world population is 4,219,000,000 people, who live on six continents: Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe and Australia. Comprising 9.6 percent of the earth, the seventh continent, Antarctica, does not have any inhabitants. Over two-thirds of the people of the world live on the continents of Asia and Africa; 59.2 percent of those live on the continent of Asia itself. The continent of Africa is inhabited by 10.3 percent of the world's population. North America, South America, Europe and Australia possess 30.2 percent of all the earth's inhabitants. Prepared in 1977 from various *Background Notes*, an official publication of the United States Department of State, Appendix A lists 159 governments in the world that are involved in the control of the world's population. Appendix A also enumerates the population of each of those governments, their annual growth rate, many of the ethnic groups under the flag of the various governments and other facts. Using the same source, *The Background Notes* of the United States State Department, *The World Almanac and Books of Facts*, 1979,² also lists and describes the various nations of the world in a more updated form from the viewpoint of the United States State Department. However, there is no mention of the various ethnic groups inside of the United States of America in the description of its population.³ A comprehensive critique of the *Background Notes* of the United States Department as cited in *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1979 or in Appendix A is beyond the scope of this

thesis. The wealth of data on nations in *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1979 is cited to illustrate the opening sentence of this thesis: the issue of how nations will resolve their affairs and how subjugated people will govern their lives is the most paramount question of the day. Many of the independent nations described in Appendix A and in *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1979 are grouped, moreover, in the following twelve major international organizations, organizations that help to direct trade, the flow of money and armaments, and organizations that direct armies, such as the United Nations Armies in South Korea and the Sinai Desert. Their existence further illuminates the need for a resolution of discord among nations and of the suppression of ethnic groups such as the African-American people in the United States. These twelve major international organizations are:⁴

- (1) the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- (2) the Commonwealth of the British Empire
- (3) the European Communities (EC)
- (4) the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)
- (5) the League of Arab States
- (6) the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- (7) the Organization of African Unity (OAU)
- (8) the Organization of American States (OAS)
- (9) the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), founded in 1960 and includes Yugoslavia as an associate member
- (10) the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
- (11) the Warsaw Treaty Organization (Warsaw Pact); and
- (12) the United Nations Organization, founded in 1945 to help insure world peace.

By August, 1978, the United Nations had a membership of 149 nations.⁵ Therefore, since the dialectics of social change is a constant, unfolding, interwoven process, this thesis, "An Examination of the Question of Self-Determination and Its Application to the African-American People," seeks to provide specific answers for the direction of independent nations and subjugated people, especially African-Americans. Consequently, in this chapter the main objective is to define self-determination; this task is further accomplished through defining a nation, a national minority, independence, federation, and autonomy.

I. What is meant by Self-Determination of Nations?

Self-determination of nations is a term that applies to two

types of nations: independent and subjugated nations. An independent nation is one that can control the various branches of government that are component parts of its structure, such as the executive, judiciary, or legislative branches; an independent nation can levy taxes and allocate their use; it can organize and sustain a compulsory, free, public education system for all its citizens; it can recruit and deploy an armed force. It can enact treaties with other nations, such as the agreements that bind the nations in the twelve major international organizations. An oppressed or subjugated nation is one that is under the control of another nation and does not have the rights of an independent nation; its rights have been suppressed by an oppressor nation or nations. In some situations one or more nations may oppress another nation, jointly curtailing its rights.

Independence

Self-determination for an independent nation, therefore, means that a particular nation has the right to maintain its independence free of any external interference from another nation; it does not mean, however, that any nation has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another nation; it does not have that right. When any nation does interfere in the internal affairs of another nation, that nation opens its doors to various forms of counter-attack; it is illogical to assume any independent nation will permit another nation to interfere with its internal affairs without launching a counter-attack in order to uphold its independence.

Federation

Self-determination for an independent nation also means that it has the right to federate with any other nation or groups of nations in the world. By federation, this thesis means that a sovereign nation, a nation that has the power to make treaties with other nations, has the right to agree to join another nation in forming a larger body of nations. The specific powers that each nation will retain or give up to the higher body are decided by those nations agreeing to federate with each other. For instance, if nation A decides for various reasons it would prefer to unite with nation B and C in a larger unit or federation of nations, then no nation in the world has the right to interfere with the proposed federation of nations A, B, and C. The politics of nations B and C, moreover, cannot be used as an argument by other nations to stop nation A from uniting in this federation. Nations B and C, in addition, may be directed by people from another race than Nation A; this fact also cannot be used as an excuse to interfere with

the federation of any nation with another or a group of nations.

The converse is also true. Neither the politics nor race of nation A, for instance, can be used to block nations B and C from uniting with nation A. If given an opportunity, any nation may offer its advice on a proposed federation of nations; but other nations do not have the right, militarily or otherwise, to block the peaceful greater and greater centralization of nations, a process that helps the majority of the people of the world to overcome the misery of unemployment, hunger, lack of gasoline, and other necessities of life.

Self-Determination For Subjugated Nations

Self-determination for a subjugated nation means the right of an oppressed nation to independence. Subjugated nations are those nations that have been captured by other nations and forced into submission to their captors. Any nation that is subjugated by another nation has the right to obtain and exercise its independence. No nation in the world has the right to oppress any other nation in any form whatsoever; any oppressed nation, therefore, has the unlimited right to fight for its independence and to free itself of any oppressing nation; it has the right to expect that people throughout the world will aid it in its fight for independence, its fight to be free of all external controls.

Self-determination for a subjugated nation also means that a formerly oppressed nation that has exercised the right of independence has the right to federate itself with another nation or group of nations. Self-determination for an oppressed nation, in addition, means that an oppressed nation does not have to exercise the right of independence; a particular oppressed or dependent nation has the right to reject the status of an independent nation and elect to federate itself with another nation or group of nations. Oppressed nation one, for example, recognizes it has the right to independence, but it elects to forego the stage of independent development in favor of direct federation with nation number two. This direct form may be either autonomy under capitalism or autonomy under socialism.

A Brief Comparison of Capitalism and Socialism

Capitalism and socialism are two different social systems; they represent opposite ways of arranging the economic and political life of a country or nation. Capitalism is a system that is based on selling everything high and buying low, paying low wages to the working class and reaping high returns from the sale of goods and com-

modities for a few owners of banks, stocks and bonds. Capitalism is a system where people hoard commodities such as gasoline in order to drive up prices, selling the hoarded commodities at higher prices after the consumer has greatly suffered from deprivation. Capitalism is thus a system that maintains business is business, and all is fair in trade and war. Everything is right and nothing is wrong in selling barbiturates, cocaine, and heroin, capturing territory outside of one's country, plundering the resources of other countries, exporting finances, and always attempting to rule the world based on the principle of the constant increase of profits and more profits.

The system of socialism is the direct opposite of capitalism. None of the above mentioned situations are permitted under a socialist government. That some countries that currently call themselves socialist may engage in some of those practices does not negate the theory of socialism. As a theory, socialism upholds the principle that the wealth of a country belongs to all of the people and no one has the right to exploit or oppress anyone else. Socialism is a system that does not permit unemployment, malnutrition, hunger and lack of medical facilities; it is a system that provides equal educational opportunity for all the people and not just for the children of a few rich people. Socialism is thus a stage in the development of society that builds on the technical development of capitalism, ridding the world of the misfortunes of capitalism, such as the denial of the right to self-determination and the enslavement of those people captured in Africa during the slave trade.

Autonomy Under Capitalism

Autonomy means the right of self-government within a larger framework; the autonomous region exercises limited forms of self-government within the structure of autonomy under capitalism. Autonomy under capitalism aids some of the captured bourgeoisie to develop more and more forms of capitalist control over the population. Autonomy under capitalism is thus a form of indirect rule; the autonomous region is still exploited through the workings of capitalism. This thesis maintains that autonomy under capitalism is not a desirable form of government. When confronted with its reality, one should work to change it as rapidly as possible.

Autonomy Under Socialism

Autonomy under socialism means that a formerly oppressed nation unites with another nation or nations so that it can better work

for the elimination of all racial, national, class, sexual, religious or other oppressive differences between people. It, therefore, participates willingly in the affairs of a socialist nation as an integral part of the socialist nation, though it pays special attention to the political, economic, and social affairs in its area, especially industrial development, its history and language, educational, military and security affairs. Without an understanding of its history, for instance, the people of any nation are weakened and flounder in direction. They are unable to chart a correct future because they do not know the past. The study of history is essential in order to understand the present and to anticipate the future. Autonomy under socialism, in addition, means the socialist government works hard to develop the resources of an autonomous area, recognizing it has been deprived of industrial development as a conscious policy of the oppressor nation. Special consideration is thus given in all matters to the former oppressed nation that is struggling for autonomy under socialism. Autonomy under socialism, furthermore, starts with the premise that there is mistrust and hatred between people. This mistrust and hatred has been deliberately cultivated and fostered by vested interests throughout the history of so-called civilization in one form or another. Hatred and mistrust can be turned into their opposites. As defined in this section, through the process of implementing autonomy under socialism, hatred and mistrust between people can be gradually eradicated. The leadership and people of an autonomous region also concern themselves with the welfare and development of people in other autonomous areas, as well as with conditions of people in other parts of the world.

What is a Nation?

The 1977 edition of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* states that the word nation comes from the Latin words nation-natio. These words are defined as meaning birth, race, and nation. Nation-natio comes from natus, the past participle of the verb nascere, to be born. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* also lists three principal definitions of the word nation: first, a nation is a politically organized group; and secondly, it is a community of people composed of one or more nationalities and possessing a more or less defined territory and government; a nation is a territorial division containing a body of people of one or more nationalities and usually characterized by relatively large size and independent status; thirdly, a nation is a tribe or federation of tribes (as of American Indians).⁶ In a *Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms* the following synonyms are

given for the word, nation: "state, realm, country, commonwealth, republic, empire, kingdom, principality, colony, body politic, people, population, populace, persons, folk, society, community, public."⁷

Writing in *Black Nationalism*, E. U. Essien-Udom states:

"The concept of nationalism . . . may be thought of as the belief of a group that it possesses, or ought to possess, a country; that it shares, or ought to share, a common heritage of language, culture, and *religion* (the author's emphasis); and that its heritage, way of life, and ethnic identity are distinct from those of other groups. Nationalists believe that they ought to rule themselves and shape their own destinies, and that they should therefore be in control of their social, economic and political institutions"⁸

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines nationalism as: "loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially... a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups."⁹ A nationalist is thus one who advocates his nation's interest above the interests of all nations and peoples.

The founder of the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International, Leon Trotsky, illuminated his definition of a nation in the following analysis of the African-American people: "The Negroes are a race and not a nation. Nations grow out of racial material under definite conditions... These definite conditions are not described in this citation and thus far the author has not been able to locate any references in the writing of Leon Trotsky on how nations are formed."¹⁰ Trotsky also states: "We of course do not obligate the Negroes to become a nation; whether they are, is a question of their consciousness, that is, what they desire and what they strive for."¹¹ In other words, a nation is not a scientific fact, something observable, and independent of the wishes of this person or that group of people; according to Leon Trotsky, the existence of a nation depends upon the consciousness of the people.

Joseph V. Stalin in "Marxism and the National Question," distinguished a nation as a "historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."¹² All of these characteristics must be present in order for a nation to exist. The absence of one makes it impossible for a nation to

exist. "Marxism and the National Question" was adopted by the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party as one of its official positions on the National Question. After the publication of "Marxism and the National Question," V.I. Lenin used it as a reference and a guide, in his writings on self-determination. In attempting to solve the nationality question in the former Tsarist empire, the Russian Social Democratic Party, Bolshevik, also used the definition set forth by Joseph V. Stalin in this work as its scientific guide to determine what was a nation.

Explanation of Definition

This thesis interprets Joseph V. Stalin's definition of a nation in the following manner. A nation is a body of people, men and women, children of both sexes who inhabit a definite territory that can be measured by anyone; a nation thus has concrete territorial boundaries. The people who live in this definable territory may have developed from the same or many different families, clans, tribes, different nations or countries. Through various historical processes such as slavery, migrations, annexations, wars of conquest, and intermarriage, extending back hundreds and thousands of years, a group of people may have been moulded into a nation that inhabits a definable territory. It is also possible for many members of a given nation not to live in the territorial boundaries of their nation. They may have been forced to leave their nation's boundaries in order to earn a living, and to obtain food, clothing and shelter. Since humans communicate mainly through the spoken and written language, a nation of people must have a language by which to communicate. It need not have a different language than some other nation. It may have the same language. A nation may also have one or more languages.

People must eat, sleep, have shelter, and clothing to protect themselves from the weather. These are essentials in the lives of all people. Since everyone cannot produce everything that is needed in life, all groups of people develop methods of selling, trading, exchanging or distributing goods and services. This activity alternatively may produce a common economic life for a particular nation of people.

As people interact with each other in the production of goods, areas of living, places of residences, and other forms of life, they evolve patterns of behavior, methods of doing things, shared attitudes and habits. These tend to constitute a definite psychological outlook. This psychological outlook and pattern of behavior are reflected in the various forms of culture of a given nation: its

schools, its dances, its theater, paintings, radio and television programs, novels, plays, short stories, various forms of non-fiction material — newspapers, magazines, and books. The patterns of behavior in a particular nation will vary depending upon the type of social system and one's relationship to the means of production. The theory of socialism involves the working toward the disappearance of classes in a given society: the theory of capitalism implies building class stratification; therefore, the patterns of behavior are greatly shaped by the social system and how people live and earn their living. It must also be pointed out that the guiding ideology of a nation may vary from National Socialism as set forth by Adolph Hitler and the National Socialist Party of Germany to scientific socialism enunciated by the Russian Federated Socialist Republic, the main nation that helped to organize the Union of Soviet Federated Socialist Republics.¹³ The guiding ideology of a social system is the main force that shapes patterns of behavior.

Why Does This Thesis Accept This Definition?

This thesis accepts the definition of a nation as set forth by the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Bolshevik and articulated by Joseph V. Stalin in his work, "Marxism and the National Question," because that definition is based on objective reality and not on the wishes of various classes of people. Based on the definition of Joseph V. Stalin, it is possible to determine whether any group of people are a nation. On the other hand the definitions of Leon Trotsky and E.U. Essien-Udom are not based on reality. They await the will of a people. That will could be the will of some very rich people and not based on facts. A group of people who have no indentifiable territory could say our lost nation is in X territory. We are going to reclaim it. In order to do this, this particular group of people could begin the process of displacing hundreds of thousands of people through various fraudulent tactics, including the killing of innocent people.

II. The application of this thesis' definition of self-determination to the African-American people.

A nation is a "historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up."¹⁴ This thesis maintains, therefore, that the African-American people are a historically oppressed nation of people in the Black Belt area of the United States.

Outside of the Black Belt area they constitute national minorities wherever they reside. They are a very stable nation of people, and the Black Belt area is considered their historical homeland.

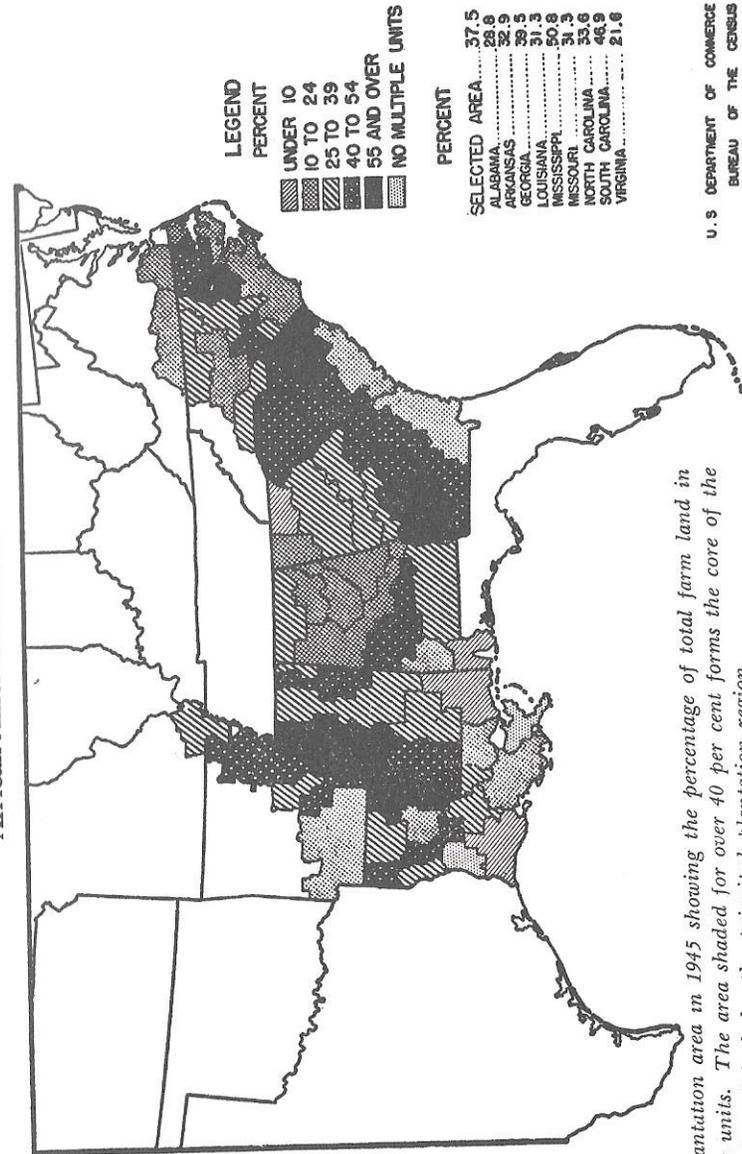
This historic homeland is located in an area approximately 958,900 square miles; its northeastern boundary starts in the eastern shore of Maryland. From there, its northern boundary extends through Washington, D.C., and into Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, a portion of South Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, and East Texas. Beginning at its northeast boundary, the southern boundary of the African-American nation is located in Maryland, Washington, D.C., North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and East Texas.¹⁵

It was in the above area that the African-American people were moulded into a nation of people through the process of capitalist development inside the United States of America.¹⁶ Coming from many different African groups and nations, the slaves of the United States of America were never permitted to understand who were their ancestors or from what country in Africa they were first taken to Brazil or other areas in Latin America or the Caribbean, including the African slaves from the island of Cuba. The African slaves in the United States of America, a people whose descendants constituted the core of the African-American people, were never permitted to read and write or to acquire property. They were slaves, a people to be beaten and worked until they collapsed.¹⁷ English is the common language of the African-American people, a language they learned to speak and to utilize in written form from the year 1619 until the present, a language that they are learning more and more to utilize with greater skill. English is the language from England that most of the people of the United States of America are learning to employ as the medium of communication. For many people in the United States English is not their first language, though this situation is rapidly changing.

African slaves were used on this rich and fertile land to produce many agricultural products. After the Emancipation Proclamation, the edict that freed the slaves of the United States of America, the African-American people began to acquire property, to rent land, and to engage in share-cropping, a system where one-half of all profits is given to the landlord or the landlady for the use of the land.

It has been noted, however, that this thesis maintains the African-American slaves helped to develop their own economy under slavery. They simply did not control its distribution and profits.

Outline Map of the Oppressed African-American Nation



The plantation area in 1945 showing the percentage of total farm land in multiple units. The area shaded for over 40 per cent forms the core of the Black Belt and includes the principal plantation region.

The above map of the oppressed African-American nation is a reproduction of the frontispiece map in Harry Haywood's **Negro Liberation** (New York: Internat...

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After the Emancipation Proclamation, the former slaves were now free through the efforts of millions of people the world over and through their own internal struggles on all fronts to travel anywhere and to unite with other Black people in northern areas of the United States of America. The reverse process was also possible and the interchange helped to produce more economic institutions among Black people. At the same time these shared experiences and history as slaves and free people from the Black Race moulded a particular psychological make-up inside the African-American people. As is true with all other capitalist nations the African-American nation has its rich bourgeoisie, its middle class, its working class and its lumpen proletariat. The psychological make-up varies from class to class.

This thesis takes the position that the African American oppressed nation has the option to fight for its independence from the United States of America. As an independent nation, it is entitled to a seat in the United Nation and in all other world bodies; as an independent nation it has the right to federate with any country in the world. Moreover, the oppressed African-American nation can unite with other oppressed nations inside the United States and wage a struggle for socialism in the United States of America as well as inside its own boundaries.

The option of independence is open as well as the option for autonomy under existing economic arrangements, i.e., the oppressed African-American nation has the right to insist now upon autonomy. Autonomy now might well improve the misery of the descendants from Africa, a people who have been formed into a nation inside the United States of America, a people who have consistently fought for their own emancipation as well as the freedom of all the people of the world.

III. *Summation and conclusion*

The following chapter, Chapter Two, will examine the experiences of Tsarist Russia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Fourth International to test whether the above conclusions are valid. From the experiences of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the People's Republic of China began to implement autonomy inside its boundaries after its revolution of 1949. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam also did the same thing after its August, 1945 revolution. To know what has happened to the former nations of Tsarist Russia is critical to the future of the world, especially to the African-American people, for the slaves of the United States of America and the serfs of Tsarist Russia were similar

in many ways, though not the same. Consequently, the issue of how nations will resolve their affairs and how subjugated people will govern their lives is still the most paramount question of the day. Concerning the Fourth International, it has taken the position that the Negroes in the United States of America are not a nation. On the other hand, Leon Trotsky maintains that if the Black people in the United States of America want to be a nation, then the Fourth International has no other choice but to mobilize a fight against imperialism on behalf of the Black people of the United States.

After an analysis in Chapter Two of the ideas of Leon Trotsky, the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International on self-determination and how self-determination was implemented in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, this thesis will trace in Chapters Three and Four how the Communist Party USA handled the question of self-determination. Chapter Four will also summarize the actions of some other major parties and organizations after World War II on the question of self-determination of nations, such as the Progressive Labor Party and the Communist Labor Party. Regarding the Communist Party USA, that party liquidated itself in 1944 in the midst of the worldwide fight against the fascist Axis powers, becoming the Communist Political Association and liquidating the principle of self-determination of nations. Reconstituting itself and restoring the principle of self-determination after World War II, the Communist Party USA again liquidated in 1959 the position that African-American people were an oppressed nation.

"*Which Way for the Black Belt*" is the title of Chapter Five, the last chapter of this thesis. How will the historic homeland of the descendants of the former slaves from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean develop is a crucial question. Considering the arrangement of power inside the twelve major international organizations cited in the beginning of this chapter, what steps will help the oppressed African-American nation? Chapter Five will seek to answer these three questions and others, stressing at all times that while the African-American nation fights for its survival in an interdependent and constantly changing world, it must always help the entire people of the world in the fight against hunger, unemployment, lack of resources and for the necessities of life: sufficient food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Such action by the African-American nation and its national minority areas will contribute to the positive resolution of the affairs of nations and subjugated people, a category of people whose status must be changed. This thesis, hopefully, will provide the scientific answers for the immediate solution of the problems of subjugated people anywhere in the world.

¹*The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1979 (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc. 1979), p. 422.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 513-597.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 591-592.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 599-600; consult Appendix B

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 598.

⁶*Webster-Merriam, New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Massachusetts, 1977), p. 755.

⁷Joseph Devlin, *A Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms* (New York: popular Library, Inc., 1961), p. 194.

⁸E. U. Udom-Essien, *Black Nationalism, A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), p.6.

⁹*Webster, Merriam*, p. 756.

¹⁰Leon Trotsky, *On Black Nationalism and Self-Determination* (New York and Toronto: Pathfinder Press, 1978), p. 24.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹²Joseph V. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, (Moscow, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1953), pp. 300-381.

¹³Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1940). On the concluding page, page 994, Hitler writes: "A State which, in the epoch of race poisoning, dedicates itself to the cherishing of its best racial elements, must some day be master of the world." For additional information on National Socialism, consult: Konrad Heiden, *A History of National Socialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935), and Glenn B Infield. *Eva and Adolph* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974).

¹⁴Joseph V. Stalin, (*op. cit.*), p. 307.

¹⁵Consult the outline map of the oppressed African-American nation on page 17A.

¹⁶Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley, *The Negro In Our History* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., Publishing Agency for the Association For The Study of Negro Life and History 1972), esp. pp. 83-99.

¹⁷E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro In the United States* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1957), esp. pp. 3-43.