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Amiri Baraka in Temple of Kawaida auditorium in Newark, where photos of Marx, Lenin and Mao, above stage, have joined those of black leaders

## Baraka Abandons 'Racism' as Ineffective And Shifts to 'Scientific Socialism' of Marx

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NEWARK, Dec. 26—Amiri Baraka, the prolific poet and playwright turned political activist, who has emerged during the last decade as a major intellectual force in the black-nationalist movement in this country, now says that movement must change its focus and direction because it has become ineffective and racist.

Mr. Baraka has decided to embrace "the scientific socialism" of Marx and Lenin "that emphasizes economic class struggles."

He is telling followers in and outside of the Congress of African People, which he helped found in 1970, that they must join with poor whites and other economically disadvantaged ethnic groups in a common fight to improve their living conditions and end capitalism here.

Declaring that he had been profoundly influenced by the writings of Amilcar Cabral, a contemporary revolutionary figure who was killed in Portuguese Guinea, Mr. Baraka said in a recent interview that these writings "only revealed that much of the thought of these comrades was based directly on the scientific socialist theory

founded by Marx and Engels."

"It is a narrow nationalism that says the white man is the enemy," said the 40-year-old Mr. Baraka in the interview. "We were all guilty of that, but it's not scientific at all."

The philosophical shift by one of the few surviving militants in the black movement is considered by others in the movement at least as significant as the shift made by the late Malcolm X when he returned from Mecca and told his followers that white people were not inherently evil, as he had previously proclaimed.

But, like Malcolm X, Mr. Baraka is having a difficult time explaining his reversal of philosophical thinking to his followers, who are accustomed to hearing him and other militants blame the American society and the white power structure for the economic and social problems of black people here.

Mr. Baraka's single-minded and almost single-handed change of direction—for he admits it is no simple evolution but a break with the recent past—has prompted the resignation of several top leaders from the political council of the congress.

Chief among these are two New York-based leaders, Haki Madhubuti, leader of the Institute for Political Education, and Jitu Weusi, leader of the East, a black cultural organization in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.

### Coalition Opposed

In a recent article in Black Scholar, Mr. Madhubuti warned that the black nationalist movement is being infiltrated by "the white left," which he said wants to place black people in the vanguard of the world socialist revolution.

Mr. Weusi has said, in a recently published interview, that while he respects some of the socialist theories of Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung, these leaders do not hold the solution to the problems of black people. He also opposed any coalition with white radical groups.

In the most recent edition of his column, "Raise!!" in his monthly publication, Unity and Struggle, Mr. Baraka tells of being upbraided by some of his followers for repudiating his earlier writings and then launches into a spirited attack on some aspects of black-nationalist thought, combined with an appeal for understanding.

"Nationalism, so-called, when it says 'all non-blacks are our enemies, is sickness or criminality, in fact, a form of fascism,'" he said.

"Nationalism is reactionary when it becomes simply reverse racism, where the same kinds of pseudo-science and charlatanism are used to justify a black super race as are used to justify a white super race," he added.

Among the more visible changes noticed at the Temple of Kawaida, at 13 Belmont Street, are that the traditional African dress has been replaced by casual clothes such as blue jeans and sweatshirts, that photographs of Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung have joined those of Malcolm X and other black figures on the walls, that Mr. Baraka is now called "chairman" instead of "Imamu," the African title that was used to identify him as spiritual leader of Kawaida.

Mr. Baraka has also announced the phasing out of his African Free School and the performing of traditional African weddings, focusing instead on improving public education.

Mr. Baraka said that expressions of African culture such as the wedding ceremony and the observance of the African festival Kwanza instead of Christmas, should be important to blacks but not to the extent that they support the nationalist concept that the "struggle is in Africa" and not in America.

In a pamphlet prepared for a recent meeting of congress members in Harlem, Mr. Baraka traced his espousal of "reactionary nationalist theory" to a number of causes. Among them were the following:

"Our acceptance of the reactionary aspects of the black-power line that came out of the sixties . . . the heavy influence of the Black Muslim dogma and world view on nationalism . . . confusing bourgeois nationalism with patriotism and the national liberation struggle . . . misunderstanding 'culture' as it applied to blacks in North America . . ."

He said that many leaders of the nationalist movement had become comfortable members of a "black bureaucratic elite" for whom the black liberation struggle had become a topic of debate instead of action.

"The black liberation movement in essence is a struggle for socialism," he said. "That is, the complete reorganization of society and total redistribution of the world's wealth."

"That is our mission, to relate our philosophy to the day-to-day struggle for existence in the city," he said. "People will come to realize we are sincere in what we are trying to do."

In line with this, Mr. Baraka has formed his own labor union

and has taken up the cause of Newark cab drivers who have been barred from the main terminal of the new Newark International Airport, the cause of sidewalk vendors who were forced out of the midtown shopping district, and students whose summer jobs ended sooner than promised because funds ran out.

During the summer Mr. Baraka announced his intention to form a labor union to represent city workers and others—whites as well as blacks—who must deal with the city government or who have grievances over hiring and pay procedures.

The paradox of Mr. Baraka's active presence in Newark is his inability to mobilize and maintain a traditional political power base in his home town while heading an organization that has offices in 11 cities, including Cleveland, Houston and St. Louis.

While running as LeRoi Jones in the nineteen-sixties, he lost a bid for an elective post in the Newark Model Cities Agency. He had better luck as one of the organizers of the black and Puerto Rican political convention that endorsed Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson and three black City Council candidates in their first successful run for office in 1970.

However, there were other factors contributing to Mr. Gibson's election, chiefly the Federal corruption trial of former Mayor Hugh Addonizio and other members of his administration.

Since then, candidates supported by Mr. Baraka for Congress and for county and local office have lost. Early this year, Mr. Baraka's followers held another convention and this one was snubbed by Mr. Gibson and two of the three black members of the City Council.

Those who ignored the convention won re-election, while the Central Ward Councilman, Dennis Westbrook, the man most closely identified with Mr. Baraka, was defeated.

But Mr. Baraka said that while political power in the traditional sense of the two-party system was important to Americans, he believed it was an "illusion."

"Every four years the ruling class allows the people to elect their enemy—the man who will rip them off until the next election," he said.