

On June 1, L.B. Johnson made a policy speech on the status of Afro-Americans in the United States. Johnson's speech contained numerous admissions that U.S. capitalism had failed to resolve the Afro-American question--that the situation was becoming more difficult for U.S. imperialism.

Revisionists have long attacked Marxist theory on impoverishment of the masses with arguments of American exceptionalism. In 1961, James Jackson, WORKER editor and CPUSA leader, wrote (in a pamphlet falsely titled "Under the Banner of Leninism") "The mainspring of the growth of revolutionary consciousness nowadays should be not in telling the worker that tomorrow he will be worse off than in other days."

According to Johnson (Howard University speech 6/1/65) "Between 1949 and 1959 the income of Negro men relative to white men declined in every section of this country. From 1952 to 1963 the median income of Negro families compared to white actually dropped from 57 per cent to 53 per cent." And, "In the years 1955 thru 1957, 22 per cent of experienced Negro workers were out of work sometime during the year. In '61 thru '63 that proportion soared to 29 per cent." Thus the governmental agent of U.S. capitalism is forced by events to refute the revisionist agent of U.S. capitalism, Jackson.

Proponents of American exceptionalism deny the existence of an oppressed Afro-American nation in the South.

In the Howard University speech Johnson admitted, "Most of these Negroes live in slums. Most of these Negroes live together a separated people and men are shaped by their world." Also, "...American Negroes have been another nation...." And again, "They still, as we meet here tonight are another nation."

Again we see the spokesmen for U.S. imperialism coming closer to facts than the CPUSA leaders. Why? U.S. imperialism is suffering serious setbacks in Viet Nam. Its vicious nature is being exposed in the Dominican Republic and the Congo. Johnson seeks a quiet home front and makes the above admissions to appear sympathetic to Afro-Americans aspirations. At the same time he lets the middle class audience know that tokenism for a few is OK, but the black masses must be satisfied with promises, prayer and "American justice."

American exceptionalism fosters the notion that U.S. capitalism is exempt from the contradictions that effect other capitalist countries; that U.S. capitalism is superior to other capitalisms. Since U.S. capitalism in the imperialist stage is the main enemy of all peoples, since the revisionists spread awe and fear of U.S. imperialism then American exceptionalism becomes an important aspect of revisionism.

American exceptionalism deals only with what is different in the status of Afro-Americans in the South as compared with other peoples struggling for national liberation. Marxist-Leninists look at the question from all sides and hold that the Afro-American question in the South has more in common with the struggles of the Congolese and Vietnamese than differences.

American exceptionalism claims that the struggle of Afro-Americans is essentially a struggle for ending racialism and discrimination. Marxist-Leninists claims it is essentially a struggle for state power, the right to self-determination in the South, and for rights of an oppressed national minority in the North and West.

American exceptionalism is not limited to the CPUSA. POC claims that "The Negro refugee from the Black Belt encounters the same oppression in the North, East & West that victimizes him south of the Mason-Dixon line." Ad Hoc calls for self-determination "both in the South and in the metropolitan Negro communities." Marxist-Leninists cite the history of the black nation, its economic, territorial and cultural development and thus expose all tales that North and South are the same. Such equalitarian arguments

objectively serve U.S. imperialism's efforts to hide the real nature of Afro-American oppression. Because Marxist-Leninists see the primacy of the South they are able to expose Johnson's demagoguery in the Howard University speech by pointing out his appointment of James P. Coleman, ex-governor of Mississippi, to the Fifth Court of Appeals. Coleman, an admitted segregationist, is now on the court that handles more appeals by Afro-Americans than any other. Johnson's words are one thing but his deeds prove him a vicious oppressor.

American exceptionalism utilizes questions such as "Negro equality under capitalism--Is there a chance?" (Ad Hoc). Ad Hoc has been advancing in the struggle against revisionism, but their June issue was a step backwards. For this is another way of denying the focal nature of the contradiction between imperialism and national liberation struggles. It is another way of saying that the Afro-American question is not a national question, but simply a class question. Marxist-Leninists see the black liberation movement as an Achilles heel for U.S. imperialism. Marxist-Leninists say that the path to anti-imperialist unity and to Socialism can not be found without a correct policy on Afro-American liberation struggles.

In recent months there has been a lot of noise about "integrating" Boston schools, "ending racial imbalance", etc. Mrs. Louise Day Hicks, Chairman of the Boston School Committee, has not budged an inch. As long as Afro-Americans do not press the right to police their own areas, do not press for their quota of jobs, do not fight for Afro-American principals in their schools, do not demand power to bargain for money for Afro-American schools--and the right to run their own schools--as long as Afro-Americans are misled into believing that they can have freedom with the white ruling class holding power in their neighborhood--then Mrs. Hicks can laugh at her "opposition"--an unarmed opposition. Let the Afro-Americans in Boston and their allies press for the rights of an oppressed national minority, then Mrs. Hicks and the bankers behind her will perk up and take notice.

American exceptionalism accepts as immutable boundaries created by U.S. imperialism. This leads to passive acceptance of U.S. troops in Puerto Rico, Guantanamo, Dominican Republic and Afro-American territory in the South. Marxist-Leninists, relying on the working class as the main revolutionary force, take a truly patriotic position, a position for liberation of all peoples oppressed by "our" profiteers. Marxist-Leninists stand ready to return territory stolen from Mexico, to pay reparation in land and cash to the Indian peoples, to Latin American peoples as well as to the oppressed Afro-American national minority in the North and the Afro-American nation in the South.

Sections of the world Marxist movement have temporarily yielded to American exceptionalism on the question of Afro-American liberation. Johnson indicates that the imperialists hope to utilize this weakness to help maintain their power. U.S. imperialism will soon face armed struggle by Afro-Americans fighting for a free black nation in the South. This struggle will develop support from all Marxist-Leninists, all oppressed peoples.

The revisionists who were all out for L.B. Johnson last November are now trying to appear critical of him. Many even deny they supported him. They must maintain some pretense of being anti-imperialist in order to continue their service to Johnson and U.S. imperialism. The revisionists in all countries who backed Johnson betrayed the working class and national liberation movements. We want to hear their self-critical explanations and denunciation of Brezhnev, Hall and Tito. Only then can their anti-Johnson protestations be of use.

U.S. imperialism has shown its fear and hatred of the Afro-Asian Conference being held in Algeria this fall. For unity and success of the national liberation struggles spells doom for the monsters of Washington and Wall Street. The peoples of Africa and Asia will be united with Latin Americans and Afro-Americans in the U.S.--the monster will be crushed--the people will win.

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