

Against Bourgeois-Liberal Distortions of Leninism on the Negro Question in the United States

By HARRY HAYWOOD

BEFORE the Fourth Congress the bourgeois formula "race question" found general acceptance in the Party as a definition of the Negro question in the United States. The fact that no one questioned the correctness of this formula was itself indicative of the passivity and general lack of clarity in the Party in the field of Negro work. Its utilization not only reflected an incorrect line but also played an active role in hampering a Marxian formulation of the question.

It is quite clear now that after the decisions of the Fourth Congress on the Negro question to consider this question as a "race" question is to underestimate the intrinsic revolutionary strength of the Negro liberation movement, to fail to understand its basis in the final analysis as the struggle of the Negro masses upon the Black Belt for national independence, i.e., for self-determination.

Indeed, this was the essence of the opportunist line of the renegades Pepper and Lovestone, as expressed in the theory of "second industrial revolution in the South," which put forth the perspective of liquidation of the Negro peasantry and hence the social basis of the Negro liberation struggles within the frame-work of the present system. It was no accident that these latter repeatedly emphasized in resolution and speech that the Negro question was a "race" question. Such a definition flowed logically from their opportunist line.

The October resolution of the E.C.C.I. by definitely establishing the Negro question in the United States as a national question, at the same time revealed the bourgeois essence of the formula "race" question. It is therefore but natural that this resolution which laid the basis for a complete turn in Negro work, a decisive break with the opportunist line of the past, should be met by the most desperate resistance on the part of all opportunist elements in the Party. All of these now take up the opportunist chorus; "the Negro question is a race question," seeking in this manner to drag the Party back into the old rut and hamper its orientation upon the new line.

The fact that there exist a "practical" alliance between the

chauvinist elements and some of our Negro comrades, should not be the occasion for wonder. It merely confirms the Bolshevik axiom that there is no difference in substance between open opportunism and opportunism covered by "left" phrases, in this case represented respectively by the chauvinist tendencies among white comrades and the "left" social democratic tendencies among Negroes.

The chauvinist tendencies in the Party are rooted in a deep lack of faith in the Negro masses, a hangover of social democratic and A. F. of L. ideology, which finds its political expression in an under-estimation of the liberation struggles of the Negroes. The proponents of this position consider the Negro movement not as an ally of the proletariat, not as a movement to be utilized in the interest of strengthening the class struggle of the latter, but as a factor detracting from pure proletarian class struggle, as something contradictory to that struggle. They therefore deny the struggles of the Negroes in the name of the proletarian revolution. On the other hand, the "leftism" among Negro comrades is a complete capitulation before the chauvinist position. The comrades representing this position find themselves in the absurd position of trying to fight chauvinism in practice, while at the same time accepting its main theoretical premises. It is clear, therefore, that this "fight" reduces itself to a mere farce.

Comrade Huiswood, in an article entitled "The World Aspects of the Negro Question" appearing in the February *Communist*, gives us an excellent example of this latter tendency. In this article written one year and a half after the Fourth Congress, he not only revives the opportunist formula "race" question, but attempts to give it a theoretical basis. In this manner he places himself in direct opposition to the CI line, giving objective support to the rankest chauvinism. Attempting to prove that the Negro question in the United States is a race question as opposed to a national question, Comrade Huiswood, together with his co-"thinkers" prove instead their absolute desertion of the Marxian-Leninist position on this question and inevitably slide down into the swamp of the most sterile bourgeois liberalism.

THE CLASS ESSENCE OF BOURGEOIS RACE THEORIES

It is not by accident that revolutionary Marxism nowhere places the question of an oppressed people, i.e., a social question, as a race question. Race, as a social question, exist only for the ideologists of the bourgeoisie and in the minds of those deluded by them. With these the purely biological category race, based upon differences within the human species, such as color of skin, texture of

hair, etc., acquires a social meaning, i.e., race becomes an explanation of social phenomena. Upon this false premise are reared equally false theories which claim the existence in nature of master and slave races, the former by their "inherent" qualities destined to rule, while the latter because of the absence of these qualities are fitted only for a menial position. The existence of a different level of advancement among peoples, the fact that European nations have reached a higher economic and political stage of development than say, the Africans or Asiatics, is not considered as accidental, i.e., as the result of objective natural and social causes but is attributed to the "natural" superiority of the Europeans. The purely physical concept "race" is identified by these theoreticians with intellectual, moral and cultural traits. White skin becomes the symbol of civilization, high culture and intellectual prowess, while black skin symbolizes barbarity, low morals, dependency, etc. The struggle between the two is regarded as the result of "instinctive," racial antagonisms. It is perfectly logical therefore that in the "interests" of humanity it becomes the duty of master races to watch over these incapables, to shoulder the "white man's burden" and to see to it that they serve society in that capacity, which by virtue of their "natural" shortcomings they are best fitted.

It is clear that behind these theories is concealed the definite class policy of the bourgeois ruling classes, that they are merely a cloak for national oppression. They represent a proper ideological super-structure for a system based upon the super-exploitation of subject peoples, a moral sanction for the prevailing social order.

However, it would be a serious mistake to underestimate the profound social role played by these theories. Arising first as a moral sanction for a national colonial policy, these dogmas become fixed in laws, in turn influence politics and in this manner react again upon the social economic basis, sharpening and deepening the exploitation of subject peoples and perpetuating the existing social relations.

The basic policy of the bourgeoisie of oppressing nations in regard to "subject" peoples is directed towards the arbitrary arresting of the economic and cultural development of the latter as the essential conditions for their least hampered exploitation. This is the real meaning of all national (racial) oppression.

In order to carry through this policy, the ruling classes of the oppressing nations requires the utmost isolation of the subject peoples under its denomination, the complete segregation of the masses of their own nation from those of the oppressed. Towards this end they utilize all available circumstances. Differences of race, language and culture become so many advantages in the realization

of this policy. Chauvinist theories are reared up, glorifying the language, culture and race of the oppressing nations and villifying similar qualities and institutions of the oppressed, all of which serve the purpose of cultivating among the masses of the oppressed nations feelings of scorn and hatred for the oppressed, while on the other hand, among the latter sentiments of rancour and distrust in regard to the oppressing peoples as a whole. In this manner they are pitted against each other and the isolation of the masses of the oppressed nations achieved.

Unable to win the masses for its predatory policy by purely ideological means, the ruling classes of the oppressing nations through bribing the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy with portions of the super profits extracted from the exploitation of subject peoples, creates for itself a social basis among the masses of its own nation. These in turn become interested in the national-colonial policy and serve as the social bearers of chauvinism among the masses and in the labor movement.

Thus in France, the French bourgeoisie utilized the French workers against national minorities represented in this case by the Italian, Spanish and colonial immigrants. In addition to sustained chauvinist propaganda among the French workers, the bourgeoisie plays upon the petty bourgeois moods of the latter. By holding out to them greater opportunities to rise to the position of foremen, labor aristocrats, etc., it succeeds for a time to keep up the bar between them. In this manner the French bourgeoisie are enabled to receive a relative super-profit from the special exploitation of the immigrant workers.

However, the United States offers us the most classic example of this policy. Here the labor aristocrats led by the A. F. of L., fully cognizant of the fact that their privileged position can only be preserved at the price of the exploitation of the split up, unorganized and unqualified workers, composed chiefly of immigrants and Negroes, actively aid the bourgeoisie in perpetuating the position of the latter. This fact was already noted by Engels in a letter to Herman Schlutzer, dated March 30, 1892:

"The working class (the native-born American workers, H. H.) has developed and organized mainly in trade unions. But according to the position it occupies it is an aristocrat, which has the possibility to leave the simple and badly paid occupations for the emigrants. From the emigrants only a small part enter the aristocratic trade unions, they are sub-divided into nationalities, which in the majority of cases do not know the local language. And your bourgeoisie can far better than the Austrian Government incite one nationality against the other, Jews, Italians, Czechs, etc., against Germans, Irish, etc., so that in New York I believe exists such

differences in the standards of life of the workers as would be inconceivable in other countries." (Retranslated from Russian).

To this it is necessary to add that the special exploitation of the foreign born is in general confined to the first generation. The second generation already becomes 100% American, adopting the language and culture of the country. Therefore, the ideological pre-requisites for their further retention as a distinct national minority disappears.

But the greatest advantages in carrying through a national colonial policy exist in those cases where the oppressing nations are distinguished from the oppressed by pronounced physical differences (differences of color, texture of hair, etc.). Such is the case in the United States, Africa and the West Indies. In Africa and the West Indies, this advantage is augmented by territorial separation of oppressed and oppressing and particularly in the case of the African colony by distinct languages, dialects and long-standing national and tribal cultures in marked contrast to the oppressing imperialist nations.

In this respect the position of American Negroes differs from that of the Negroes in West Indies and Africa. Here they are not territorially separated from the oppressing white American nation, but on the contrary, live together with the whites within the confines of one State. Under these conditions the bourgeois ruling classes must pursue the most energetic policy in order to keep up the bar of separation between white and Negroes, i.e., retard the process of assimilation and thus preserve the conditions for the super-exploitation of the latter. This fact, together with the absence of a distinct language, the weakness of national culture among Negroes, has led to a more pronounced emphasis upon the race factor as the only factor upon which the bourgeois ruling classes can erect a hostile ideology directed towards inflaming the "national mind" against them. These are the main causes why in the United States we find the racial factor more emphasized than in Africa or the West Indies.

In addition to the above, racial ideologies have here an older traditional basis than in most countries. The peculiar historical development of American capitalism bound up as it was with the development of cotton production and the necessary utilization of Negro slave labor, contributed to the early rise of racial theories. The moral sanctioning of the brutal system of slavery necessitated the exclusion of the Negro slave from the human category. The race theories of this period were consequently directed towards establishing the Negroes as a sort of sub-human species, who by

virtue of their "inherent" mental incapacity were doomed to eternal slavery.

With the "emancipation" of the slaves and their consequent conversion into semi-slaves on the land and lowest paid wage-slaves, in the cities, these ideologies underwent a corresponding change. The sub-human status occupied by the Negroes in the moral norms of the preceding system became incompatible with their new economic and social status. It became necessary to transfer the Negro from a sub-human type into a human being, but however, of an inferior sort. In the South where the social and economic survivals of slavery are most pronounced, we find also its strongest ideological hangovers. Here the Negro is still regarded as little better than an animal and treated in a corresponding fashion.

The epoch of imperialism or monopolistic capitalism, the political superstructure of which, according to Lenin, "is a return from democracy to political reaction," reflects a similar retrogression in the realms of ideology. In the United States the further fusion of finance capital with remnants of pre-capitalistic form in Southern agriculture, which takes place in this period, is accompanied by a corresponding unity in the field of ideology.

It is therefore not accidental that in the last 2 or 3 decades, i. e., with the development of imperialism in the U. S., we witness a pronounced strengthening of racial ideologies. Within this period the "theoreticians" of race have increased their activities a hundred-fold. Virtual floods of literature on "race questions" have flown from their prolific pens. It is necessary to note however, that these theories have dropped their old primitive trappings and appear now in a pseudo-scientific garb. Dogmas of inferior and superior races are now paraded forth as a scientific fact. Hilferding in his "Finance Capital" correctly notes the tendency of finance capital to prostitute science to its interest on the national question.

"Since the subordination of foreign nations is carried out by force, that is by very natural means, it appears as if the ruling nations owes its domination to special natural qualities, i. e., to its racial peculiarities. Thus the strivings of finance capital for power acquires in the ideology of race the trappings of scientific justification; its actions in this way receive the appearance of being conditioned and rendered necessary by natural science. In place of the ideal of democratic equality there appears the ideal of oligarchic domination." (Retranslated from the Russian.)

It therefore becomes understandable when in the United States we find serious scientists occupying themselves in trying to substantiate the dogma of basic differences between races, by seeking for differences in the bio-chemical composition of the blood of Negroes and whites.

Thus in the United States the race factor appears to dominate in the relation between whites and Negroes. The aggressive nationalism of the American bourgeois ruling classes when directed against the Negroes acquires a racial cloak. American national culture appears as the culture of the white race. Science, art and philosophy receive a racial stamp. American institutions become the white man's institution and are contrasted in a derogatory manner to those of the Negroes. National culture is interpreted as racial culture.

It is quite natural therefore that this tendency would evoke a similar trend among Negroes.

The economic and social strivings of the nascent Negro bourgeoisie and intelligentsia is expressed ideologically in a racial form. The race ideology of the white bourgeoisie becomes opposed by Negro race ideology. Thus, in the last two decades with the growth of a Negro bourgeoisie, all elements of a Negro culture have been created. This culture includes historical background based in part upon ancient African civilization, Negro art and literature reflecting the environment of oppression of the Negroes in the United States, etc. This tendency received its most extreme expression in the Garvey movement with its black gods, black religions, glorification of all things black, etc.

As in all cases of national culture, this tendency among Negroes reveals an attempt of the Negro bourgeoisie to mobilize the masses under its ideological influence in the furtherance of its own class interests.

It is clear from the foregoing that the so-called race question of bourgeois sociologists as it appears both in Africa and in America, consist *in fact* in the *utilization of the physical difference*, i. e., differences in color of skin, texture of hair, etc., *between Negroes and whites by the imperialists for the purpose of facilitating, sharpening and perpetuating the exploitation of the latter.*

A MARXIAN-LENINIST FORMULATION OF THE QUESTION

A real Marxian-Leninist formulation of the question will show that the Negro question in the United States, similar to all questions of backward and subject peoples, arises not out of any so-called natural and immutable differences between Negroes and whites, that it is not the results of "instinctive racial hatred," but has its *objective roots* in the difference of economic and cultural development between Negroes and whites under the conditions of a class order of society. This difference far from being due to any "inherent" traits of either, is the result of the fact that owing to certain objective social causes, the white peoples in Europe and

America were able to reach a higher stage of economic and political organization than the Negroes in Africa. This fact, together with the culmination of a series of economic and social circumstances, the growth of merchant capitalism and the slave trade, the necessity of utilizing cheap slave labor in the development of a new continent—created the basis for the enslavement of the Negro peoples. Therefore, under the class system of society in the United States, the difference between backward and advanced peoples becomes converted into a contradiction between oppressed and oppressing peoples.

However, the socio-economic content of the Negro question changes in accordance with definite stages in the development of capitalism in the U. S. During the period of slavery, the Negro question was a slave question, a struggle between Negro slaves and white slave-masters. With the "emancipation" of the slaves, the consequent development of the Negro peoples in a capitalist environment and the growth of class differentiation among them, the Negro question takes the form of a national question. The socio-economic content of the contemporary Negro question in the U. S., consists on the one hand in the efforts of the imperialists through national oppression to violently retard the economic and cultural development of the Negroes, to perpetuate the semi-slave form of exploitation in Southern agriculture and hence the basis of super-exploitation of the Negro workers all over the country; and on the other hand, in the struggle of the Negro masses, against national oppression, for equality which latter can only be realized through revolutionary struggle for the right to national self-determination of the Negroes on the Black Belt.

Race as a category of national science, i.e., a super-historical concept, exerts no influence upon the social development of people in contemporary class society. The efforts of the bourgeois theoreticians of "race" to artificially transplant a category of natural science into the realm of social phenomena is merely an attempt to furnish a "scientific" pretext for a national colonial policy. But, false race ideologies thus created play an important role. These facilitate the isolation and segregation of the masses of the oppressed nation from those of the oppressor, thus making possible the retention of the economic and cultural backwardness of the former and in this manner facilitates their super-exploitation. Thus race ideologies give the bourgeoisie of the oppressing nation the possibility of deepening and perpetuating the national oppression of weaker peoples.

Imperialism as a system which draws its main struggle from the super-exploitation and oppression of backward and weaker peoples, must inevitably utilize every advantage which would serve to prolong those conditions of its existence. External physical differences between oppressing and oppressed peoples are utilized by the imperialists in a similar manner as differences in language, religion, etc. For example, the national policy of American imperialism in relation to the Negroes, seeks its sanction in dogmas of inferior and superior races. By virtue of this, national ideology of the American bourgeoisie when directed against the Negroes appears as racial ideology, national antagonisms appear as racial antagonisms. Conflicts breaking out upon this basis are called "race" riots, "race" wars, etc.

It is therefore quite evident, that race as an ideology plays a big role in the national oppression of the Negroes in the U. S. Regarded in this sense it must be said that race becomes a factor in the national question.

But it would be absolutely erroneous, on the basis of this, to ascribe to what is in fact an ideology the importance of a social question in itself. To do so would be equivalent to reducing the national question to one of its factors. Concretely it would be tantamount to reducing the Negro question, a social question, to a question of race-ideology, i.e., to blur over the economic and social roots of this question, and finally to a capitulation before bourgeois race theories.

Precisely in this consists the basic methodological error of those comrades who maintain that the Negro question in the U. S. is a "race question" as opposed to a national question. Confused by the prominence of the race factor in the relations between Negroes and whites, these comrades believe that these relations cannot be explained on the basis of Marxian-Leninist theory on the national question. To consider this question a national question would be, according to them, to "simplify" the question. Therefore, they feel it necessary to make some "improvements" on the teachings of Marx and Lenin on the question of oppressed peoples and to set up a new category, the conception of "race" as a "social" question. In this manner they follow in the wake of bourgeois ideologies who attempt to transplant the biological concept race into the sphere of social phenomena, and inevitably end in reducing the Negro question to an ideological factor. Those comrades who magnify the role of the "race" factor in the relations between Negroes and whites in the U. S. must inevitably arrive at a practical agreement with the liberals who regard the Negro question not as basically a socio-economic question, having its ob-

jective roots in the economic and cultural disparity between Negroes and whites under the conditions of a class order of society, but as a question which arises as the result of the "inherent evilness" of human nature to be overcome through proper education!

HOW THE COMMUNIST ADHERENTS OF "RACE" THEORIES REDUCE THE NEGRO LIBERATION MOVEMENT TO A FEEBLE BOURGEOIS OPPOSITION

Politically in the contention that the Negro question is a "race" question is contained a deep under-estimation of the powerful economic and social forces lying at the basis of the Negro movement and consequently an under-estimation of the revolutionary potentialities of that movement.

This fact is quite clearly revealed in all the writings of the exponents of this viewpoint. For example, in the above mentioned article Comrade Huiswood departing from this scientifically untenable premise attempts to substantiate his position by creating non-existent differences between the position of Negroes in Africa and the West Indies on the one hand and of those in the U.S.A. on the other. He says:

"It is essential that we *distinguish* the situation of the Negro masses in the colonies—Africa and the West Indies; the semi-colonies, Haiti and Liberia, who suffer from colonial *exploitation* from that of the Negroes in America, a *racial minority* subject to racial persecution and exploitation." (???)

"We must take into consideration the *national colonial character* of the Negro question in Africa and the West Indies and the *racial character* (?) of this question in the United States." (Emphasis mine, H. H.)

In spite of his confused terminology, it is quite evident that Comrade Huiswood wishes to contend that there exists a fundamental difference in character between the exploitation and oppression of the Negroes in the United States and those in Africa and the West Indies. Let us examine the facts. We have already indicated that the colonial policy of imperialism is directed towards retarding economic developments of subject peoples as the best condition for the extraction of super profits. Therefore it is obvious that colonial exploitation can have no other meaning than just this extraction of super profits, which in turn can only be carried out through political oppression, i.e., through national, or as Comrade Huiswood prefers, "racial persecution." The question is naturally raised, does Comrade Huiswood infer that American imperialism derives no super-profits from the exploitation of the Negroes in the U. S.? One has only to take into consideration the position of the Negro peasantry, the difference between the average

wages of white and black workers, the number of white skilled workers in proportion to skilled workers among Negroes, to arrive at an idea of the enormous super-profits derived from the exploitation of the Negro toilers in the U. S. What then is the meaning of Comrade Huiswood's vivid description of the miserable conditions of the Negroes, low wages, peonage and share-cropping, etc., if they do not point precisely to this fact. If the foregoing is true, i.e., if considerable super-profits are derived from the exploitation of Negroes in the U. S., then it is clear that the character of their exploitation as well as their oppression does not differ from the character of exploitation and oppression of the Negroes in Africa or the West Indies. The Negroes in the United States are an oppressed national minority, i.e., an "internal colony" of American imperialism. To assume that there is a difference in character between the exploitation of national minorities and colonial peoples is to fail to understand the teachings of Lenin on the national-colonial question. The fact that the exploitation varies in degree—e.g., the Negroes in the U. S. are not as intensely exploited as for instance the Negroes in Congo—is due mainly to differences in cultural and economic development between the Negro populations in the two countries and not in the character of their exploitation. Therefore, to insist that the Negroes in the U. S. are not subjected to exploitation of a colonial character is to "forget" about share-cropping and peonage in the South, the miserable conditions of the Negro workers all over the country and to play into the hands of bourgeois reaction.

Thus we see that the attempt of Comrade Huiswood to prove his thesis that the Negro question in the U. S. is a "race" question inevitably results in the elimination of the very basis of the Negro liberation movement. It is not remarkable therefore that Comrade Huiswood arrives at the quite consistent conclusion that "it's only distinctive feature (the Negro question, H. H.) is its racial origin" (!!).

Is it not obvious that any imperialist interested in covering up the economic and class roots of the Negro question would agree with such a formulation?

We will not dwell in detail upon the other glaring errors contained in Comrade Huiswood's article, e.g., his total misunderstanding of the characteristics of a nation among which he includes "majority of population and organized communes," (?!?) whatever this may mean; or his complete blurring over the peasant question, behind which is revealed the old opportunist Lovestone-Pepper idea of liquidation of the Negro peasantry through migration and industrialization. All this merely shows that Comrade

Huiswood's "world aspects of the Negro question" are different from those of the Comintern.

For a more consistent exposition of the viewpoint which contends that the Negro question in the U. S. is a "race question" as opposed to a national question, we are obliged to turn to Comrade Sheik. Undoubtedly Comrade Sheik in his numerous articles and theses on "race questions" has won the spurs as chief theoretician of this position.

The basic views of this comrade were set forth in an article entitled "To the Question of the Negro Problem in the U. S." (*Revolutionary East*, No. 7, 1929). These views can be reduced to the following basic argument. Says Comrade Sheik:

"We cannot speak about national antagonisms between whites and Negroes in the U. S. in the ordinary sense of that term, because the American Negroes are *not* a nation. Apart from the complete absence among them of a national language, a national culture; in their racial conflicts with the white Americans, *the fundamental economic content and sense of all national antagonisms is absent; the presence of two economic systems standing at different stages in social economic development.*" (Emphasis mine.—H. H.)

Leaving aside for the moment the question of national language and culture, we shall deal first with the most fundamental argument of Comrade Sheik, which is contained in the last sentence. Here Sheik reduces the fundamental question of the economic essence of nationalist movements to the schematic and non-Marxian formula of contradiction between two "economic systems standing at different stages of socio-economic development." Such a formulation of the question is glaringly incorrect from a methodological standpoint. It is difficult to understand how in the epoch of imperialism, one who calls himself a Marxist could speak without qualifications about the "existence of two economic systems standing at different stages in socio-economic development." Still, since Sheik himself does not qualify this statement we would be presumptuous to assume that he means other than what he says. It is obvious, however, that only one who is absolutely incapable of understanding the peculiarities of the present imperialist epoch could speak in such a categorical manner.

Leninism teaches us that the epoch of imperialism or finance capital, among other things, is distinguished by the penetration of capitalist relations into the most remote sections of the earth, and the drawing in of the most backward peoples into the sphere of world market relations, *i.e.* into the general imperialist system. In the colonies or among backward peoples, we are not confronted with two systems standing at different stages in socio-economic develop-

ment, but what we are confronted with is the interweaving of the most varied socio-economic forms—primitive tribal, feudal, slavery, etc. with capitalist relations, all subordinated to finance capital. It is therefore obvious that there is no Chinese wall between socio-economic forms, least of all in the present period. There exists one economic system, imperialism, which inevitably subordinates to itself, preserves and utilizes all pre-capitalistic forms in the plundering and exploitation of subject peoples. Of course there exists difference in the economic and cultural levels between oppressed and oppressing people, but this does not mean, as Sheik obviously implies, a difference between two economic systems.

Regarded in this manner, the socio-economic background of national antagonisms between oppressed and oppressing peoples is not a contradiction arising as the result of two different economic systems, but as a result of differences in economic and cultural levels between oppressed and oppressing peoples which under imperialism becomes a contradiction between finance capital on the one hand, which preserves and utilizes all pre-capitalistic forms in the super-exploitation and oppression of backward peoples, and on the other hand, the independent economic development of these peoples. It is obvious that in precisely this consists the economic content of the antagonisms between Negroes and the whites in the U. S., *i.e.* in the contradiction between finance capital which preserves and utilizes semi-slave forms of exploitation of the Negro masses in Southern agriculture and in this manner preserving the conditions for the super-exploitation of the Negro toilers all over the country, and the economic and cultural development of these latter. The same slave remnants in Southern agriculture are an integral part of imperialism. It is equally obvious that Sheik in denying the existence of national antagonisms among Negroes, denies at the same time the economic content of the Negro question.

It is also necessary to state that Sheik's inference that the Negroes have no special culture is absolutely unfounded. We have already indicated that the Negroes have a culture which reflects their whole historical development as a people in the U. S. And as to separate language (and this is evidently what Sheik means when he speaks about "national language"), this is not one of the prerequisites of the nation. "A common language for every nation is necessary, but a different language for every nation is *not* necessary" (from the pamphlet on *Marxism and the National Question*, Stalin).

Therefore, it is not surprising that Sheik, ignoring the powerful socio-economic factors at the basis of the Negro question in the

U. S. should arrive at a purely subjective definition of the Negro question. For example, he says:

“The race question exists as a *social question* thanks to the *physical differences between peoples* and to the fact that *racial prejudices* arising on this basis are often utilized by the exploiting class for guaranteeing and strengthening their privileged position.” (Emphasis mine.—H. H.)

According to this the Negro question does not arise from the difference in the economic and cultural development between Negroes and whites and the policy of American imperialism to perpetuate this disparity, *i.e.* to artificially arrest their economic and cultural development as a condition for the attraction of super-profits, but on the contrary, arises, “thanks to the physical differences between Negroes and whites and prejudices arising on this basis!” In other words, the Negro question is a question of “race prejudices” and “physical differences!” Does this not in reality constitute a complete capitulation before bourgeois race theories and a practical agreement with the Liberals? But we will allow Comrade Sheik himself to draw his own political conclusions. Further he says:

“Not being actually connected by inner ties and separated from the dominating races by anything but *artificial racial divisions* and race oppression arising on this basis, an oppressed racial minority does not necessarily reveal in its ideology those traits which are characteristic for the ideology of oppressing nations. The basic determining traits of this ideology *is not the striving towards separation and independence, but on the contrary, a striving towards intermingling and amalgamation, towards full social equality.*” (Emphasis mine.—H. H.)

Thus, the Negro liberation movement is deprived of all revolutionary content and becomes a struggle for social equality *not* in the revolutionary sense which in the South can only mean independence and the right of self-determination, but social equality in the liberal-reformist conception of that term, *i.e.* a “struggle” against “race prejudices” and “artificial racial divisions.” It is clear that only the liberals and reformists counterpose the demand for independence to the demand of social-equality. It is precisely they who foster the illusions that the struggle for social equality is not a struggle directed at the very basis of imperialism, not a struggle, the implications of which are national independence for the Negroes in the Black Belt, but a struggle against the superstructure of racial ideology and race prejudices which they entirely divorce from its economic roots. Consequently, according to them, the objects of this “struggle” can be obtained within the capitalist system without revolutionary strug-

gle. And as we have seen, Sheik's position amounts objectively to this.

HOW THE COMMUNIST "THEORETICIANS" OF RACE TURN LENIN INTO A BOURGEOIS LIBERAL

It is quite clear from the foregoing that the mistakes of the Communist exponents of "race theories" are inseparably bound up with and arise out of an anti-Marxist and essentially liberal approach to the national question in general. It is therefore not surprising but on the contrary, perfectly consistent, that this non-Marxian approach is not confined to the national movement of the Negroes in the United States, but to nationalist movements in general. Thus, Comrade Sheik puts forth as one of his strongest theoretical arguments the statement that:

"Among American Negroes there is no developing industrial bourgeoisie, hindered in its economic development the struggle of which (for its free economic development) for the winning of internal markets and for the removal of obstacles standing in the path of economic progress, could give these national movements a progressive character." Further he asks: "*Where then is the need for markets, about which Lenin spoke? Where then is the necessity for the removal of all obstacles?*" (My emphasis, H. H.)

Sheik is evidently under the impression that only the struggle of the industrial bourgeoisie for markets can give nationalist movements a progressive character. If this is so, then not only the movement of the Negroes in the United States, but also those of the Negroes in the greater part of Africa are *not* progressive as an industrial bourgeoisie among Negroes in both the United States and the greater part of Africa is practically non-existent.

It is, however, clear that this contention has nothing in common with Marxism. Sheik in vain refers to Lenin, as Lenin nowhere and at no time reduced the national revolutionary movement to a struggle of the industrial bourgeoisie for markets. On the contrary, Marx, Engels and Lenin at all times considered that the revolutionary strength of bourgeois democratic nationalist movements (even in the classic period of the downfall of feudalism) to lie mainly in the struggle of the peasantry. The peasant basis of the nationalist movements for Marxists has always been the revolutionary basis of the national question, the pre-requisite of the struggle for a revolutionary solution by the lower masses of the questions of overthrow of the yoke of medieval barbarism and the winning of national and political freedom. In this connection, Lenin wrote:

“Typical of the first period (i.e. the classic epoch of the rise of nationalist movements, H. H.) is the awakening of national movements, the rallying to them of the peasantry, the most numerous and most inert section of the population in connection with the political freedom in general and for the right of nationality in particular.” (Lenin’s Works, Vol. XIX, p. 90).

Thus revolutionary Marxism has always recognized two tactics or, to be more precise, two strategical lines in the process of struggle against national oppression; the line of the popular masses, which is a consistent struggle for the revolutionary solution of a national question and the line of the national bourgeoisie which tends towards conciliation with the forces of reaction and to betrayal of the masses. Any other viewpoint is bound to lead to a Menshevik appraisal of nationalist movements. These two lines become more and more clear in proportion to the development of the class struggle within the oppressed nation with the result that at the present time—the epoch of imperialism—the national bourgeoisie in all the important colonial countries has already deserted the national liberation movement. The national question becomes ever more a question of the peasantry.

Stalin admirably formulates the changes of the national question. In this connection he says:

“This quintessence of the national problem *now* is the struggle of the *popular mass* in the colonies and of the subjugated nationality against finance capitalism, against political enslavement and the cultural retention of these colonies and nationalities by the imperialist bourgeoisie of the ruling nations. *Of what significance can the competitive struggle of the bourgeoisie* of the various nationalities be in this formation of the national problem? Of course, *not of decisive importance*, and in *some cases of no importance at all*. It is quite obvious that it is chiefly a question here not as to whether the bourgeoisie of one nationality beats or can beat in the competitive struggle the bourgeoisie of another nationality, but it is rather a matter that the imperialist group of the ruling nationality exploits and oppresses *the basic masses and first of all the peasants* of the colonial and subjugated nationalities and in oppressing and exploiting them, draws them into the struggle against imperialism, making them our allies in the proletarian revolution.” (Emphasis mine, H. H. *Bolshevik*, Nos. 11 and 12, 1925; translated from Russian).

This is diametrically opposed to Sheik’s contention. The nationalist movements in the imperialist epoch are linked up with the question of socialism over capitalism. The national question is now “essentially a peasant question.” “The peasant question lies at the roots of the nationalist question.” Sheik eliminates the struggle of the Negro peasantry and therefore deprives the Negro

of a profound revolutionary force and in this manner arrived at a practical agreement with the reformists and liberals.

From the foregoing it is clear that the so-called race question, as conceived by Sheik and others, is nothing more nor less than the same old bourgeois race theory dressed up in a cloak of Marxian terminology and as such represents both from the standpoint of methodology and consequently, in its theoretical and political conclusions, an absolute desertion of revolutionary Marxism for the camp of bourgeois liberalism. Sheik has become entangled in the meshes of bourgeois ideology, namely, because of his inability to understand the national question in the Marxian-Leninist manner.

A concrete historical and economic analysis is the indisputable demand of Marxian theory in the treatment of any social problem. Such a demand applied to the concrete situation of the Negroes in the United States means the treatment of this question within certain historical confines. We must establish the definite historical stage of development through which the Negro people in the United States are passing at the present time.

North America has witnessed two bourgeois revolutions; the War of Independence (1775-81) and the Civil War (1861-65). The first revolution achieved the independence of the colonies from Great Britain. But owing to the weak development of capitalism in the country it could not proceed with any consistency against the pre-capitalist elements. In fact, Northern industry owed its development to slavery. "Without slavery," writes Marx, "North America, the most progressive country in the world, would have been transformed into a patriarchal country." (Poverty of Philosophy).

Not until a much later date did slavery become a real obstacle to capitalist development. The contradictions between the two systems did not culminate until the Civil War. The Civil War according to its social and economic contents was a bourgeois revolution, the struggle between slave-holders of the South and the industrial bourgeoisie of the North. It was the struggle of the Northern bourgeoisie for full state power, for the establishing of a capitalist state which would most fully meet the demands of developing capitalism, and for the unification of the country under the domination of the industrial bourgeoisie. This of course meant the overthrow of the power of the slave-holding oligarchy and the destruction of slavery as a system.

In the course of the struggle the slaves were emancipated. The Northern bourgeoisie basing itself upon the freed Negroes and utilizing the latter in the capacity of allies established a revolutionary dictatorship over the conquered territory for the purpose of con-

solidating the gains of the revolution. (Reconstruction Period). In order to strengthen its social base the Negroes were granted full bourgeois democracy—suffrage, right to set in legislature, etc., all of which was constitutionally guaranteed in the enactment of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendment, and in turn backed up by specially mobilized Negro militia and Northern federal troops.

However, the Northern bourgeoisie was incapable of carrying a revolution through to the end. They could not carry through the complete expropriation of the former slave-holders and give the land to the Negroes. It was inevitable that these "rights" of the Negro masses were short lived. These masses were soon deserted by the Northern bourgeoisie, which latter entered into a rapprochement with the dethroned Southern landlords.

The Negroes, dastardly betrayed by their former supporters, poverty stricken and without land were left at the mercy of the reactionary landlords. They were speedily deprived of their newly won political rights and forced back into a semi-serf position upon the land of their former masters.

Thus, the revolution ended in an abortion. Its results may be summed up in the following manner: it destroyed slavery thereby reckoning the basis for the existence of the plantation system in its old form. In this manner it created the conditions for the development of capitalism all over the country. But inasmuch as the abolition of slavery was not accompanied by the division of the land among the Negro masses it led to the establishment in Southern agriculture of the same relationships as followed the overthrow of feudalism in some of the European countries—the semi-feudal system of share-cropping. In this connection Lenin correctly criticized the petty bourgeois economist, Himmel, who contended that the United States had not known feudalism and was unfamiliar with its economic remnants. To this Lenin replied "that the economic remnants of feudalism in no way differed from the economic remnants of slavery and in the form of the slave-owning South, these remnants are very strongly felt up to the present time." (The development of capitalism in Agriculture in the United States—translated from Russian).

The unfinished agrarian revolution as reflected in the preservation of the remnants of slavery in the economy of the South has its political counterpart in the unfinished bourgeois democratic revolution (as far as the Negroes are concerned) as reflected in the denial of democratic rights to the Negro masses.

From the above analysis it is quite evident that as far as the Negro peoples are concerned the task of the completion of the bourgeois democratic and agrarian revolution *still* stands upon the historical order of the day.

By leaving unsolved the task of the bourgeois democratic and agrarian revolutions, while at the same time making possible the development of class differentiation among Negroes, the Civil War, created the social and economic basis for the Negro and national question which has its objective pre-requisite in the territory of the Black Belt. The struggles of the Negro masses thus become converted from struggles of slaves against slave-holders into struggle of "freed men" against white landlords and capitalists against combined capitalists and semi-slave forms of exploitation and national oppression, for complete bourgeois democracy, i.e., social and political equality, which finds its highest expression in the struggle for self-determination. The Negro toilers, once the allies of the Northern bourgeoisie and betrayed by the latter during the reconstruction period, have now become potential allies of the proletariat.

In the epoch of imperialism the Negroes no longer represent an almost homogeneous undifferentiated peasant mass as was the case immediately after the civil war, but have developed within themselves a comparatively large proletariat, a fairly numerous strata of petty bourgeois and intellectual elements, as well as the beginnings of a small but not yet clearly defined bourgeoisie. This development, taking place in an environment of national oppression, which is greatly intensifying in the epoch of imperialism, strengthens and accentuates the trend on the part of the Negroes for political emancipation.