

A STUDY PROGRAM

IMPERIALISM AND BLACK LIBERATION

THE FIRST NATIONAL conference of the African Liberation Support Committee — *Which Road Against Racism and Imperialism for the Black Liberation Movement* — was clearly an historically significant occurrence. (For a report on this conference see *THEBLACK SCHOLAR*, July-August 1974.) The conference was the first of its kind and scope to put before everyone involved in the black liberation movement — activists, workers, students, and community representatives — clearly articulated and completely developed *alternative* theoretical positions for the direction of our movement. The full significance of such a conference at this stage in our history is summed up in this statement from the conference call:

Black people are at a stage in struggle that requires us to regroup and develop a new approach. We are in a period of economic crisis, a period of mass discontent and government instability, police repression, and imprisonment of political activists. To counter this there is a growing militancy in the ranks of workers, tenants, students, prisoners, women, and many others. *There is a new stage in our movement coming into being.*

The African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) is important precisely because it has correctly summed up the historical experiences of black people and has consistently presented a program of action that has corresponded to the subjective and objective aspirations of black people. Hence, its program has been wholeheartedly embraced and

supported. Two stages have occurred in the development of ALSC:

1—The first stage was one in which the motive force was the expression of solidarity with the heroic struggles of our brothers and sisters in Africa for socialism and against imperialism, particularly in areas dominated by racist European settler regimes. In 1972 and 1973, this led to more than 200,000 people mobilizing in 50 cities and in several countries and more than \$40,000 for the armed liberation struggle in 1973.

2—This concrete practice in support of our brothers and sisters in Africa led to a deeper understanding that the *imperialism* which exploits and oppresses Africa is rooted in the system of U.S. *monopoly capitalism* which is responsible for the class (economic) exploitation and racist oppression that we as black people suffer here at home. As the historic ALSC *Statement of Principles* clearly asserts:

Black people throughout the world are realizing that our freedom will only be won through a protracted struggle against two forces — racism and imperialism. The world imperialist system festers in Africa and Asia and engulfs the Western Hemisphere as well. In the United States we know it as monopoly capitalism, in Africa it is imperialism in its colonial or neo-colonial form. Wherever it appears, its cornerstone is the white ruling class of the United States of America.

This deepening consciousness led to the consolidation of ALSC as an anti-racist, anti-imperialist Black United Front with the clear

PEOPLES COLLEGE is an anti-imperialist collective in which students and workers have been engaging in agitational and propaganda activities since 1970. An earlier Peoples College was formed by Charles Johnson of Fisk University in the 1930s to unite the college and community in social uplift and educational programs. The present Peoples College sees itself as a renaissance of this early effort

on a higher political level, and it is committed to the liberation of black people and the development of revolutionary struggles for socialism. One of the founders and leading members of Peoples College is Abdul Alkalimat (Gerald McWorter). Peoples College may be contacted at P.O. Box 5747, Nashville, Tenn. 37208.

by PEOPLES COLLEGE

understanding that we can destroy imperialism and free Africa by destroying U.S. monopoly capitalism and freeing ourselves.

OUR MOVEMENT is thus at a high point of mass struggle around issues of international and national dimensions, all essential to the Liberation of our people. But we have known such high points of motion before in our long history of struggle. If we can succeed in maintaining such a high level of mass struggle — and succeed we must — then the future of the black liberation movement is bright. ALSC has recognized the historic crossroads we face and has correctly identified our most critical need:

The black liberation movement is in need of a coherent strategic program for change that will weld together the many separate forces into a mighty black fist that can beat the paper tiger of *imperialism and racism* to death.

Such is the call as it has been sounded. What is to be the response? Concretely, what is the level of commitment and the program of action for those of us who are at work in the academy — as teachers, as students, writers, researchers, journalists, etc.? How are we as intellectuals to serve the people in the struggle for liberation?

It is here that the essential link between the academy and the struggle — between theory and practice — must be further strengthened and expanded. Black intellec-

tuals and scholars and black activists must struggle to consolidate this link if the black liberation movement and the building of a new social order is to be both militant and successful because it is based on clear theoretical formulations rooted in scientific investigation. Intellectuals and scholars are charged by the masses of people with a major responsibility in the research, production, and dissemination of scientific knowledge — knowledge that will provide a basis for the correct theory and the correct strategy and tactics that will insure the success of the black liberation movement.

Thus, while the black working class must of necessity lead the black liberation struggle — because of its unwavering militancy and because it has the firmest grip of the levers of social change of any sector of the black community — all progressive forces truly interested in the liberation of black people have a definite and important role to play. Each and every one of us has an absolute mandate to get fully involved in the black liberation struggle.

Many revolutionary leaders have spoken of the role of intellectuals and scholars in the struggle. Black intellectuals have not historically — in a militant and consistent fashion — lived up to and fulfilled this role. Instead, as Brother E. Franklin Frazier stated, "most Negro intellectuals simply repeat the propaganda which is put out by people who have large economic and political interests to protect. They have failed to study the problems of Negro life in America in a manner which

would place the fate of the Negro in the broad framework of man's experience in this world."

Comrade Mao Tse-tung in a 1941 report to a cadres' meeting summed up a situation which existed then in China in a way that speaks to many of the problems facing us: "We have not done systematic and thorough work in collecting and studying materials on (our conditions), and we are lacking in a climate of investigation and study of objective reality. . . . To be crude and careless, to indulge in verbiage, to rest content with a smattering of knowledge—such is the extremely bad style of work that still exists among many comrades . . ." To correct these shortcomings Mao proposed, in this essay called "Reform Our Study", that extensive study of current conditions, study of history, and the study of international revolutionary experience be undertaken. It was here that Mao's famous dictum "no investigation, no right to speak!" was invoked.

IN RECENT MONTHS, the growing anti-imperialist and anti-racist motion of the black liberation movement has resulted in growing awareness and discussion inside the academy and inside of organizations of black intellectuals and scholars of the two-headed monster which stands in the way of our freedom—*Racism and Imperialism*. A November 1973 conference on "Crisis, Conflict and Change: The Caribbean in the 1970's" sponsored by the Afro-American Studies Program at Fisk University provided a forum for a full and critical exploration of imperialism and foreign domination in the Caribbean. The African Heritage Studies Association, at its annual conference in New York in April, 1974, co-sponsored along with the African Liberation Support Committee, a symposium on "Imperialism and Black People in the 1970's." A similar symposium was presented at the Atlanta conference of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists in May 1974. Similar discussions on imperialism and black people were scheduled for conferences of the Association of Black Psychologists, the Association for the Study

of Afro-American Life and History, and the African Studies Association.

There is, however, an opposite tendency which we must not ignore. And that is the tendency to ignore these essential issues in the struggle of our people for justice, peace, and freedom and to continue or to enter into new and unprincipled "detentes" with many of the same forces which have served as intellectual arms of the ruling class of U.S. imperialism in the exploitation and oppression of black people.

In such a critical period as the one in which we find ourselves, there is an urgent need to *focus* all our intellectual and material resources on the full and all-sided investigation of the principal enemies of the black liberation movement—imperialism and racism. This focus will provide a base for developing force that is now seriously underdeveloped in the growing assault of the black masses against U.S. monopoly capitalism and imperialism: an ideologically clear and militant anti-imperialist, anti-racist black intelligentsia.

This sector of the black liberation struggle must begin to struggle as militantly in the research, production and dissemination of knowledge as black workers are struggling on the job. To guide this important work, we must develop an anti-imperialist, anti-racist agenda for black intellectual work and we must propagate the insights and information which result by developing course curricula, organizing collective research projects, and publications.

To facilitate this process of developing greater understanding of imperialism and racism—the principal enemies of black liberation—and to focus our resources toward this end, we put forth the following proposal for an intensive and extensive year-long program of study and struggle around the general theme of *Imperialism and Black Liberation*.

There are wide-ranging and serious discussions and debates in many groups in an increasing effort to focus on the concrete conditions of black people and to develop a clear understanding of the fundamental structure of society. From this understanding, it would

then be possible for us to derive a clear conception of the historical structure of exploitation and oppression facing black people in the United States and in other parts of the world.

These discussions have generated some heat, but a much larger quantity of light. From these discussions we have abstracted several major questions which have been raised by participants in these sessions, particularly at the symposium on "Imperialism and Black People" co-sponsored by the African Heritage Studies Association and the African Liberation Support Committee on April 6, 1974. These questions define the principal focus of our year-long program of study.

- What is imperialism? How did it develop? What is (U.S.) monopoly capitalism and its relationship to imperialism?

- What has been and is the impact of imperialism and monopoly capitalism on black people in the United States in all aspects of our lives—employment, education, housing, culture, politics, etc.? How have black people in Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere been affected?

- What is the relationship between racial oppression and class (economic) exploitation?

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- What should a socialist United States look like? What must be the class character of the revolutionary struggle for socialism in the U.S. given the necessity for black people to wage a national liberation struggle?

- What general lessons can be learned and used to black people from the world revolutionary and socialist experience?

The following is a model for developing a course or study group on *Imperialism and Black Liberation*. The course grows out of the major questions outlined above. The

readings are generally available materials and considered useful as basic texts. The final course outline which you develop should reflect your concrete conditions: availability of materials, additional readings which may deal with particular aspects, resources like films, speakers, forums, etc.

IMPERIALISM AND BLACK LIBERATION

1—What is imperialism and monopoly capitalism?

A. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*

B. Baran and Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*

2—What was the role of black people in the rise of imperialism?

A. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*

B. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*

C. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*

3—What is the class struggle? What is the relationship of racism and black people to class struggle?

A. Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa*

B. Baron, *Demand for Black Labor*

C. Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*

4—Do black people constitute a nation or a national minority?

A. *Selections From V. I. Lenin and J. V. Stalin On National Colonial Question*

B. Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation*

5—What is the character of imperialism today?

A. Magdoff, *The Age of Imperialism*

B. Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*

C. Jalee, *Imperialism in the 1970's*

6—What is socialism and what contradictions are resolved and what new contradictions arise in the transition from capitalism to socialism?

A. Huberman and Sweezy, *Introduction to Socialism*

B. Sweezy and Bettelheim, *On the Transition to Socialism*

7—What is revolution and what is to be learned from the revolutionary experience of the Third World?

- A. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*
- B. Case studies of revolutionary struggles in Africa, Asia, and Latin America: Peoples Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Cuba, Algeria, Somalia, Congo-Brazzaville, Tanzania, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau.

THE NOTED BLACK sociologist, Oliver C. Cox, made an observation over 10 years ago that is now an even more compelling challenge to black intellectuals to come to grips with the *fundamental* cause of the problems facing black people:

... nothing could be more important than an understanding of the nature of capitalism (and imperialism). All major social change, involves, essentially, processes of the capitalist system—a system so pervasive that by opening of the twentieth century, the life of practically every individual on earth has been brought within its purview. (From his *Capitalism as a System*)

Thus, all black intellectuals have an important role to play in studying and coming to grips with this awesome but not invincible two-headed monster that is choking our people all over the world. Only on the basis of thorough study can we then effectively turn our skills to the practical problems of defeating racism, and imperialism.

We can urge the support and adoption of this proposal by all of the professional caucuses and organizations which have emerged in the various disciplines, by Black Studies Programs, by independent black

educational institutions, by student groups, and especially by individuals and groups of individuals who see the absolute necessity of getting down to some serious study to make the contributions of black intellectuals to the black liberation movement a serious and meaningful one.

We particularly want to urge the full support and cooperation of the members of the African Heritage Studies Association, the African Liberation Support Committee, the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, the Caucus of Black Economists, the Association of Black Psychologists, the Afro-American Scholars Council, the C.L.A., similar black organizations, the black caucuses which have developed inside the American Sociological Association, the American Historical Association, other professional organizations, as well as the readers of the *African World*, *The Black Scholar*, *Black World*, *Muhammad Speaks*, and the *Review of Black Political Economy*.

All of these important institutions and publications and the people they involve by their past practice have demonstrated the kind of commitment — when collectivized and focused — will form a sharp and powerful intellectual cutting edge for greater service in the black liberation struggle. We invite your full participation and encourage your input into your organization or publication to build its program around a productive year of study and struggle on the question of *Imperialism and Black Liberation*. In the near future we hope to have a series of regional conferences to have full discussion of the issues raised by this study program. Details of the conferences will be announced shortly, or you may write to us at Peoples College, P.O. Box 5747, Nashville, Tenn. 37208.

