

THE MEANING OF MARTIN LUTHER KING'S DEATH

The 1960's are notable for the upsurge of national liberation struggles throughout the world. The 60's have seen gallant struggles by the peoples in many oppressed nations. None of these peoples have yet achieved liberation from imperialist oppression.

In the Congo, in Vietnam, in Indonesia and in the Arab countries national liberation struggles have been temporarily setback by unprecedented genocidal assaults. The main perpetrator of genocide has been U. S. imperialism. It has been aided by Australian, British and Belgian imperialism in the worst instances of genocide. In all cases of aggression and genocide it has relied on the sometimes indirect, sometimes open, support of its demagogic but consistent ally--Russia.

The Afro-American people have also been the object of attacks which were characterized by genocidal measures. So-called Civil Rights laws and demagogic talk of integration has been accompanied by a sharp increase in "legal" and illegal murders of Black men, women and children. Does the murder of Reverend Martin Luther King mean genocidal assaults against Afro-Americans on the Indonesia, Vietnam and Arab scale? All anti-imperialist forces have a stake in this question. Marxist-Leninist forces in the U.S. have a special responsibility to provide an answer so that a program to defeat genocide and threats of genocide can be developed and implemented both here and abroad.

The profit motivation of U.S. imperialism results in schemes for U.S. domination of the world. Questions concerning major areas of struggle against U.S. imperialism are questions for anti-imperialist forces in all nations. Theoretical and organizational support to the Afro-American people is of utmost importance. It is a principled matter for all foes of imperialism--everywhere.

The statements by Chairman Mao and the statements by the Party of Labor of Albania on Reverend King's murder are of great interest. They represent the views of forces holding state power in countries where Socialist construction has been undertaken. They influence the line and action of what are known as anti-revisionist forces in all countries.

Below are questions raised in discussion within Hammer & Steel's editorial board by forces formerly associated with us, by forces close to us and by people on the job and in the communities. Our answers are reached after thorough discussion. The situation necessitated such attention even though it delayed our newsletter's condemnation of Rev. King's murder. The condemnation has been expressed in part by leaflets, letters and oral discussions on the job, on the campus and in the community. We have sent Mrs. King a letter of condolence.

**Question:** Chairman Mao's statement of April 16, 1968 states that Rev. King "was suddenly assassinated by U.S. imperialists." Do you agree?

**Answer:** President Johnson publicly endorsed the white supremacist attack by the Memphis police on the demonstration led by Rev. King in support of the garbage workers (90% of whom were Black). Fifty Memphis police were in the vicinity of the motel where Rev. King was murdered. Vice President Humphrey was sent by Johnson to the funeral.

Humphrey had endorsed Gov. Maddox of Georgia (Rev. King's home state) as a 'good Democrat.' Maddox became governor of Georgia on a program of arming white thugs with pickaxe handles for assault on Afro-Americans. The delay in arresting the murderer is obviously the work of Memphis police, the FBI and the Johnson administration. We agree that U.S. imperialism and its government murdered Rev. King.

Question: Chairman Mao in his 1963 statement referred to the Afro-American struggle as a question of "racial discrimination." In his latest statement he says "racial discrimination in the U.S. is a product of the colonialist and imperialist system." What does "racial discrimination" mean in this connection?

Answer: This term cannot explain the oppression of Ireland by England, the oppression of Quebec by Canadian and U.S. imperialism, the Japanese aggression against China or the oppression of the Afro-Americans in the U.S. We assume that Chairman Mao is referring to the fact that Afro-Americans came originally from Africa and that most are dark complexioned. If this is what is meant by "race" then it is a factor, but not a primary factor in the struggle. The term "racial discrimination" has traditionally been used by reformists and revisionists in the U.S. to hide Wall Street's profits in the national oppression of the Afro-American people.

Question: Chairman Mao states "The contradiction between the Black masses in the U.S. and U.S. ruling circles is a class contradiction." The PLA in Zeri y Popullit (Apr. 9) states that "the Afro-American struggle is distinguished... by its interweaving with the struggle of the working class..." Did not Lenin and Stalin view the Afro-American question as a national question?

Answer: Lenin and Stalin held that the Afro-American people were an oppressed nation in the Black Belt--that the working class line was full support to the right of self-determination in the Black Belt. Particularly since 1929, when the CPUSA upheld Stalin's views, this question has been a major issue between Marxist-Leninists and the bourgeois view of the Trotskyites, Browder, Gus Hall and Rittenberg. The latter elements cleverly proclaim "class struggle" in order to aid imperialism and oppose state power for Afro-Americans. We read in the N.Y. Times that Rittenberg is in jail in Peking. His ideas are still on the loose. We find it contradictory that Rittenberg, U.S. imperialism's ambassador to China, is in jail (a good thing, if true) but no public self-critical examination of his present status has been made (a very bad thing). For if leaders sponsor Rittenberg's line throughout the world then leaders must explain to the world why this is no longer correct.

Question: Chairman Mao says, "The Black masses and masses of white working people in the U.S. have common interests and common objectives to struggle for. Therefore, the Afro-American struggle is winning sympathy and support from increasing numbers of white working people and progressives in the U.S." Are these statements based on reality?

Answer: It is true that the white working class and the Afro-American people have common long range interests--the destruction of U.S. imperialism and the future establishment of Socialism both in the Republic of New Africa (The Black Belt) and in the oppressor nation--the rest of the U.S. Chairman Mao's statement refers to the present situation. A large number of white working people enjoy special privileges. They have been bribed by U.S. imperialism. Demands of the Afro-American liberation struggle for jobs, job promotions, decent schools and land are in conflict with the privileged position of the U.S. working class. An example is the current telephone strike.

The rising Afro-American liberation movement has forced the phone companies to offer a meager training program in some cities so that a few Afro-Americans can work. The striking telephone workers in several cities are demanding this token program be dropped so that whites can hog all the jobs. Hsinhua magazine, published in Peking, gives uncritical support to the strike.

The vast majority of white workers in the U.S. supported the murder of Rev. King by U.S. imperialism. They either actively or passively supported the imperialist genocidal attacks on Black communities after Rev. King's death. Some of the 10% of white garbage workers in Memphis actively took part in the strike. This threw great fear into the Reuthers, Meanys, et al.

To our editorial board this handful of Southern whites is what is new and growing, of importance for the future. For as U.S. imperialism is weakened by blows from the national liberation struggles, from contradictions within the imperialist camp, more white workers can be won for support to national liberation struggles, for united action against imperialism. But they cannot be won by skipping over the struggles, demanded by Lenin and Stalin, against white and great power chauvinism.

Chairman Mao's line of prettifying the U.S. working class, as outlined in his '63 and '68 statements on the Afro-American question, does not serve the oppressed peoples or white workers. For the majority of white workers in the U.S. are now more poisoned with white and great power chauvinism than the German workers were under Hitler. Recently an Afro-American father of five children was pulled from his car in South Boston by lumpen proletarians and lynched in broad daylight. The white workers of S. Boston are organizing an affair in support of the lynchers. In major cities today sizable numbers of white workers and middleclass are arming themselves against just demands of Afro-Americans.

**Question:** Both the PLA and Chairman Mao note the contradiction between Rev. King's advocacy of non-violence and his violent death at the hands of U.S. imperialism. They imply that those who preach non-violence are all servants of imperialism. Bill Epton and other PL leaders, who are often quoted and given support in Chinese publications, are running around NY City saying that Rev. King was an obstacle to progress and that his death was a good thing. Why then did the U.S. imperialists murder Rev. King?

**Answer:** Rev. King was an influential representative of the Afro-American bourgeois. The Afro-American people constitute an oppressed nation and their bourgeois and middle class are an oppressed bourgeois and middle class. Because of national oppression the Black bourgeois have a strong influence on their people and in turn are influenced by their people. In all national liberation struggles Marxist-Leninists must take into account, and often coalesce with, the Sukarnos, the Nassers, the Nkrumahs, the Chiang Kai Sheks, the Ghandis and the Rev. Kings. Rev. King's ideas on violence are not only the views of most Afro-American bourgeois forces today, but they are the viewpoint of many Afro-American workers, students and intellectuals.

While the oppressed bourgeois must be included in coalitions, they cannot give consistent leadership to anti-imperialist struggles because they vacillate between pressures of the imperialists and the anti-imperialist demands of their people. Consistent anti-imperialist struggle can come only from unity of workers and rural poor in the anti-imperialist coalition and that unity is built by a Marxist-Leninist Party headed by leaders of the Stalin type.

Rev. King was the acknowledged leader in the anti-imperialist struggles in Montgomery, Selma, Birmingham and Memphis. Many of his tactics, including his advocacy of non-violence and faith in open work, were negative. His condemnation of U.S. policy in

Vietnam and his refusal to back Johnson in the 1968 elections were positive. He was the only well-known Afro-American bourgeois force to identify with the garbage workers in Black Belt Memphis, Cotton Belt Memphis--white supremacist Memphis. Rev. King saw clearly what so many pompous leftists will not see. He understood that a strike in Memphis involving Black and white workers was an important struggle.

Our struggles to lay the ideological and organizational foundations for a Marxist-Leninist Party in the U.S. are gaining ground in rough terrain. Our struggles against imperialism and revisionism, especially on the national question, require internal struggle. For example, a former close supporter and sympathizer has stubbornly upheld the view that Rev. King "was an obstacle." We cannot take responsibility for the actions or statements of this individual on any question.

The question of peaceful transition is a principled question for Marxist-Leninists. Chairman Mao, in the name of Marxism-Leninism, has supported Anna Louise Strong and Peking Review who in turn have given uncritical support to white pacifists in the U.S. This involves the integrity of Marxism-Leninism. The question of whether the bourgeois of oppressed nations profess belief in violence or non-violence at a given stage of a national liberation struggle is not in itself a principled question. To say that we only coalesce with members of the bourgeois of an oppressed people who have our view of the struggle is the sectarian "left opportunist" way of denying support to national liberation struggles. Stokely Carmichael often advocates violence but since he is opposed to self-determination he cannot unite the people for consistent anti-imperialist struggle whether the situation calls for violence or non-violence. Should we say that Marxist-Leninists do not work with followers of Rev. King because they now advocate non-violence? Or that Stokely Carmichael who practices mainly open work which exposes his people to spies, provocateurs, court trials and other attacks should not receive any support? Should M-Lists have failed to identify with Patrice Lumumba because he wrongly called for U.N. troops in his country?

Marxist-Leninists must work to unite all possible Afro-Americans around the key question of the right to self-determination. The Afro-American people will, like all other oppressed peoples, adopt Peoples War on a large scale when other methods have proven unsuccessful.

Rev. King was a leader of the Afro-American liberation struggle which are objectively anti-imperialist. That is why U.S. imperialism murdered him. H&S disagreed with Rev. King on several questions. Because we uphold Stalin on the national question--we never slandered Rev. King as an imperialist agent. The same cannot be said of Rittenberg, PL or Peking Review. The PLA and Chairman Mao cannot explain why Rev. King, bourgeois representative of an oppressed people, was murdered by imperialism. They will be unable to do so unless they uphold self-determination for Afro-Americans.

Question: In neither the PLA statements or Chairman Mao's statement is emphasis put on a Marxist-Leninist Party as an imperative necessity for successful Afro-American liberation struggles. Is this because they feel the right to self-determination is not at issue on the Afro-American question?

Answer: Part of the answer is capitulation to revisionism on the Afro-American question. The pressures of the U.S.-Russian alliance have also resulted in attempts to substitute the thoughts of one man for the collective decisions by leadership in a Party of the Lenin-Stalin type. In the international field no efforts have been made to convene anti-revisionist forces for a common line on the Afro-American question or any other question. Because there is no Marxist-Leninist Party in the Black Belt, in the Republic of New Africa, danger of increased genocide is intensified for Afro-Americans. The gist of the PLA and Chairman Mao's statements is that Afro-American liberation will happen spontaneously. This is a serious revision of M-Lism on the question of a vanguard Party.

Question: Is it the contention of H&S that there is no essential difference on the Afro-American question between the modern revisionists



on the one hand and the PLA and Chairman Mao on the other?

Answer: China and Albania are former colonial countries. They are telling Afro-Americans to wait for the white working class Socialist revolution. This is like telling the Chinese in 1942 to wait for the Japanese Socialist revolution. Or like telling the Albanians in 1941 to wait for the Italian working class to revolt. There is no break with revisionism on the Afro-American question in either the PLA in the CPC. But because of the experience of these Parties, their own leadership in national liberation struggles and because of the historical development of their countries, there is the possibility of establishing a M-List position on the Afro-American question in the near future in both the PLA and CPC.

Question: H&S has indicated that the CPC and PLA were in the process of breaking completely with modern revisionism on the national question. Is that your view now?

Answer: There were indications that such a development would take place. For example, parts of the 25 Point pamphlet and Peoples War by the CPC as well as parts of Comrade Enver Hoxha's report to the 5th Congress, PLA in 1966 pointed in that direction.

Joint Sino-Albanian statements, one just before Hoxha's report and the other last year, have now oriented their Parties to the view that the main concern of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the main danger of revisionism, is the bourgeois remnants in the Socialist countries rather than U.S. imperialism. This is a denial of Lenin and Stalin's teachings. Lenin and Stalin taught that Socialism could not be built unless the dictatorship of the proletariat placed its international obligations to the revolutionary movement first. In the name of destroying Khrushchevism the PLA and CPC adopted the Khrushchevite idea of putting development of their own countries as apart from, and more important than, the universal and their international obligations.

That explains why the CPC & PLA, representing Socialist components of the anti-revisionist movement, have not given competent leadership against imperialism and modern revisionism on Vietnam. They cry

"wonderful revolutionary situation" instead of developing an effective worldwide boycott of U.S. goods, U.S. cultural figures and U.S. owned businesses abroad. Nor have they even united the anti-revisionists on an effective program against revisionist goods to Vietnam, against revisionist personnel to Vietnam, and against revisionist betrayal on Vietnam. How can Socialist nations capitulate to a line which allows the territory of an oppressed people to be negotiated away? The false claim is made by modern and neo-revisionists that such negotiations serve the security of Socialist nations. The reality is that Soviet revisionism has betrayed a great opportunity for a national liberation victory. The line is the same, the surrender to the line is the same, whether it concerns Vietnam, the Black Belt or Palestine.

The CPC & PLA have not made serious efforts to review what happened in Indonesia, although the PLA took a small step in that direction.

The CPC & PLA on the key question in Western Asia and North Africa, the destruction of the State of Israel, have not broken with modern revisionism. They cannot therefore give full and correct support to the Palestinian people or other Arab nations. While we keep hearing from Peking about the "wonderful revolutionary situation" the danger of a new wave of genocide of Afro-Americans increases. The PLA and Chairman Mao don't support the right to self-determination which means that in practice they don't support destroying the boundary lines of U.S. imperialism. Whatever the intentions, and never forgetting the past contributions of Chairman Mao and the PLA against revisionism and imperialism, the result is assurance to U.S. imperialism, "we won't support any loss in your territory if you don't take any more of ours." Marxist-Leninists have a duty to criticize and struggle against such bourgeois views which not only weaken national liberation struggles, but endanger the existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Speaking as frankly as possible we point out that the PLA & Chairman Mao's statements on Rev. King are capitulation to the U.S.-Russian alliance on the national question.

Question: Since none of the Socialist or formerly Socialist countries presently support the right of Afro-Americans to land and state power then where will the international support for Afro-American liberation come from?

Answer: As indicated in answering another question, we believe that the possibility for a change of position on the Afro-American question could take place in Albania and China in the near future. The Afro-American people made contributions to the liberation of Albania and China in World War II. If the Albanian UN delegation cannot see fit to welcome the Congress calling for independence of the Republic of New Africa, then why can't they at least demand the General Assembly discuss the vicious attacks on the large Afro-American national minority within a few miles of the UN?

The main hope of preventing genocide lies with other oppressed peoples. We trust the heroic peoples of Vietnam will demand land and power for Afro-Americans. Such a call would strengthen both the Vietnamese and Afro-American cause. H&S appeals to the peoples of Quebec, to the peoples of Central and South America, to the Arab peoples, to the peoples of Asia and to the peoples of Africa. Boycott U.S. goods! Drive the U.S. imperialist diplomats out! Demand the arrest and conviction of the assassin of Rev. King! Demand that Johnson and Humphrey stop their genocidal attacks on Afro-Americans!

H&S once again calls on the white working class, the white students and intellectuals and the white middle class of our country to wake up! Large numbers of our people have failed to learn a lesson from Germany. They are going down the same path, hoping to reach or keep a high standard of living at other peoples' expense. U.S. imperialism will never conquer the world. They will be smashed more thoroughly than Hitler and German Imperialism were smashed.

The Afro-American liberation struggle can be the Achilles heel of U.S. imperialism. End the crimes against the Black people! Self determination for Afro-Americans! Self determination for Vietnam!

The liberation of oppressed peoples requires the destruction of imperialism, headed by U.S. imperialism. This is the decisive task of Marxist-Leninists in the world today. Victory for national democratic revolutions is a necessary stage in achieving our strategic objective of a Socialist world. Every successful liberation struggle requires a Marxist-Leninist Party playing a vanguard role, based on the common line of an international Marxist-Leninist movement. The U.S.-Soviet alliance, an objective fact, has temporarily delayed and disoriented Marxist-Leninist development. The peoples' struggle will produce a new, revitalized Marxist-Leninist movement upholding Lenin and Stalin's teachings on the national question, capable of fulfilling our obligations to oppressed people and the proletariat.

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