

have the common content of denying the decisive significance of fundamental principles, and of the necessity to carry out in an uncompromising way only principled inner-Party struggles and avoid unprincipled struggles.

It is clear that the conciliationist leadership (of the CPUSA) would like to use our break with these leftists against all those who oppose the line of the 16th National Convention, claiming that this is the inevitable result of the opposing line. Actually, the main responsibility for the growth of this "left" deviation lies with the conciliationist line of the 16th Convention itself, which prevented correct ideological struggle against both right and left deviations.

This futile attempt to justify conciliationism by attacking the left deviation will not substitute for serious self-criticism of the leadership of the Party for their own errors.

#### "LEFTISM" ROOTED IN PETTY-BOURGEOISIE

However, it is not sufficient to explain the left deviation as an over-reaction to conciliationism. The left deviation has its roots in society, and represents the influence of non-proletarian ideology within the ranks of the Party. The petty-bourgeois class roots of the left deviation also accounts for the petty-conning style of work of the POC, and the extreme individualism of its style of leadership.

But fortunately, the marriage between the "leftists" and the Marxist-Leninists was short-lived, and we can go about our constructive work free from their disruptive influence.

When it comes down to applying Marxist-Leninist science to the U.S.—to working out a correct line and mass policy—the POC has already proven itself bankrupt. It seems that we are dealing with "inner-struggle-specialists", or to put it more bluntly, brawlers, who do not know what to do with themselves if there is no one to attack. They go on at great lengths about what is wrong with the Party's position on this question, or that, but never state what their own position is.

In this open letter, I have tried to draw a clear line of demarcation between the correct Marxist-Leninist opposition to the line of the 16th Convention and the "leftist" opposition. . . in the hope that this experience will help the Marxist-Leninist Left in finding the correct path of struggle in a very difficult, complicated and unprecedented situation. These mistakes have been very costly, but they will not be in vain if we can learn from them, and maintain our vigilance against both right and left deviations.

With full confidence that we will win the struggle for a Marxist-Leninist vanguard Party in the United States, and eventually for socialism, I am

Comradely yours,

*Harry Haywood*

## **Boggs Bogs Down Workers' Struggle**

---

# **"American Exceptionalism" or Scientific Socialism**

Throughout its long history, the U.S. communist movement has had its share of "theoreticians" trying to prove that this country was "exceptional" and that the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism no longer apply here.

It was the revisionist Earl Browder, in the 30s and 40s who led the development of the line of "American Exceptionalism" saying that the industrial advancement of the U.S. was enough to end the antagonisms between the classes.

In recent years this "theory of the productive forces" has become the main form of the modern revisionism of the Communist Party USA. It is under this slogan that the revisionists have repudiated the need for revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the working class and the right of self-determination for the Afro-American people.

But the CP has not been alone in holding this "exceptional" theory. A whole array of petty-bourgeois radicals and new leftists have taken the CP's general

analysis and dressed it up in a revolutionary veneer, only to peddle the same exploiter's dream, of a capitalist society with no class antagonisms—a society where the workers and the bosses can resolve their problems “peacefully” and where revolution is not on the agenda.

### THEORY OF THE “NEW WORKING CLASS”

Out of the student movement of the 60s a counter-current developed in opposition to the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. This counter-current was exemplified by so-called “new working class” trends whose main theoreticians are now leading such groups as the New American Movement (NAM). These theoreticians claimed that because of industrialization, the working class was no longer the revolutionary class it once was and that “the mental workers” and college-trained intellectuals and technicians were now the vanguard of the socialist movement. This view is also echoed by the “Weather Underground” in their recent publication “Prairie Fire” which has been the cause of much stir and controversy in certain left circles. Their view of a “bought-off” working class has led them to reliance on a small band of heroic terrorists rather than upon mass revolutionary struggle. This same theory is picked up by the leadership of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party who praise the weathermen as the “most important” trend in the U.S. left.

Another such trend is the Liberation Support Movement, which claims to support the movements in the Third World but actually views the U.S. working class as the “lackeys of imperialism.”

Others such as the Sojourner Truth Organization claim that white workers have been bought off with “white skin privileges” and cannot play a revolutionary role until they have given up these privileges.

One of the most influential proponents of “American exceptionalism” and the theory of the “bought-off working class” today is ironically a Black worker by the name of James Boggs. Along with his wife, Grace Boggs, he has written many books and articles which have been published internationally.

There are many groups today, both within the Black liberation struggle and the anti-imperialist movement as a whole who are studying Boggs' works in hope of finding direction for their revolutionary work. They will not find it here. Boggs' writings, rather than being an effort to apply Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions in this country, are merely a rehash of worn-out theories of “U.S. exceptionalism” combined with outright attacks on the working class in this country.

Boggs says that the working class as a whole and especially the white workers actually “benefit” from capitalism and that rather than being a revolutionary

class are in fact a reactionary appendage to the imperialists with a “stake in preserving capitalism.” Throwing Marxism-Leninism out the window, Boggs puts forth Browder's theory of “exceptionalism”:

“...when we talk about revolution in the United States we are talking about a revolution for which there is no historical precedent. History has nothing to tell us about a revolution in a country where so large a proportion of the population has materially benefited from the system even while being exploited by it and therefore feels that its own interest is bound up with the active defense of the system.” (*Racism and Class Struggle*, MR Press, p. 165)

Boggs further claims that the white workers actually have a stake in maintaining the oppression of Black and other minorities and views the Black liberation struggle as a fight with no allies in this country, except possibly some “young whites” who are thrown into contradiction with the racist policies of the capitalists out of some abstract sense of alienation.

### WORKERS IN CONTRADICTION WITH CAPITALISM

But Boggs cannot explain why white workers have suffered wherever the roots of white supremacy are the deepest. In the plantation South, for example, with its long history of slavery and national oppression of Black people, white workers are also the worst off. It is here that the unions are the weakest, the wages the lowest and the general conditions of life are worst.

What Boggs cannot see is that the working class by the objective laws that govern its own existence, is thrown directly into antagonistic contradiction with capitalism.

Under the rule of U.S. monopoly-capitalism, Boggs claims that Marx's theory of value, based upon the labor power of the working class is obsolete. “Labor,” says Boggs, “once the most important means to expand production and consumption, has become increasingly expendable as the profits derived from its exploitation have been reinvested in advancing technology.” (*Ibid*, p. 166)

Rather than viewing class contradiction as being inherent in capitalism, the way that Marxism-Leninism does, Boggs' “new” theory is that the principal contradiction in this country is between “economic overdevelopment and political underdevelopment.” The working class, according to Boggs, is too concerned with economics. He blames the people themselves for being “too backward” and separates economics from politics.

In other words, Boggs rejects the Marxist materialist view of history, a view which holds that classes and class struggle are objective laws, independent of man's will. In its place he puts forth the idealist conception of history which views ideas apart from material conditions. This is how he comes up with the

view that political advancement alone will solve the basic contradiction in society and "save America."

To prove his point, Boggs mixes a bit of truth with a bit of fiction about U.S. working class history. While showing the divisions that have been spread in the ranks of the working class by the capitalists, Boggs never shows examples of class unity. His conclusions are that a multi-national communist party is impossible in this country and that "revolutionary nationalism," and not Marxism-Leninism is the theory that will lead to revolution.

The bit of truth that Boggs uses to spread this opportunist theory is that imperialism is able to buy off a section of the working class, but only a minority. This is how Lenin described this phenomena:

**"Imperialism has the tendency to create privileged sections also among the workers, and to detach them from the broad masses of the proletariat."** (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Collected Works, Vol. 22, p. 283*)

Lenin showed that through its plunder of the colonies, an imperialist country could accumulate "superprofits" with which to make "a section of the proletariat bourgeois." He showed that through this process a section of the proletariat "allows itself to be led by men bought by, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie."

The system of imperialism, therefore led to a historical split in the ranks of the working class movement between the basic proletariat and its revolutionary organizations on the one hand, and the "aristocracy of labor" as Lenin called it, with its class collaborationist, chauvinist stand on the side of its own bourgeoisie. It is this aristocracy of labor—exemplified by the present leadership in the trade unions—that keep politics away from the workers and puts forth "economics" as everything.

#### REVISIONISTS TIED TO BRIBED STRATA

This split lies at the heart of the present break with modern revisionism and the Communist Party USA, which historically has tied itself to the bribed strata of the working class. This is also the factor that links opportunism to national chauvinism and racism. It is a fact that this bribed minority of aristocrats lives off the oppression of the colonies.

It is quite natural that this aristocratic section of the class would be strong here in the U.S., a country which for decades has held the position of top dog in the imperialist world.

But this process is not "exceptional" in the U.S. For a long time, when Britain ruled the world, it was the British proletariat that was the victim of this bribery. In no way does this imply however, that the masses of people in the U.S. are bought-off or "corrupted" as Boggs says.

Boggs' writings are filled with attacks upon the masses of Americans, whom he places himself far above, despite his own obvious petty-bourgeois influences. To

Boggs, the working people of the U.S. cannot make a revolution. They are, in his words: "the most materialistic, the most opportunistic, the most individualistic—in sum, the most politically and socially irresponsible people in the world." (*Uprooting Racism and Racists, p. 157*)

Boggs not only negates the need for multi-national unity among the working class, but also opposes the necessity for a multi-national party to lead it. This is behind his call for a "Black Revolutionary Party," which is being taken up by some forces within the Black liberation movement today.

Aside from the question of organizational form, Boggs' teachings can only lead people down a blind alley. He badly misreads the present conditions in the U.S. and in the world today and greatly overestimates the strength of the enemy. By writing off the masses as a force for revolution in the U.S., Boggs spreads pessimism and defeatism. To him the victory of fascism is inevitable. Race war and counter revolution are the main trends in the world—not revolution. He writes: "Today the accumulation of social problems and of violence and counter-violence in the United States is reaching the point where there appears to be no possibility of peaceful coexistence between the races, the nations, the sexes and the generations." But what about the classes? To Boggs, here is the area where "peaceful coexistence" is possible.

#### NO ANSWER TO REVISIONISM

Boggs' theory of "American exceptionalism" is grabbed up by some young leftists in reaction to the revisionist line of the CPUSA. The CP has abandoned the Afro-American struggle and the Right of Self-Determination, and liquidated the revolutionary struggle of the working class and its party for the dictatorship of the proletariat. This revisionism has created fertile soil for petty-bourgeois ideas like Boggs to take root. Boggs' revulsion towards the working class is simply the flip side of the CPUSA's tailism of the labor aristocrats. Boggs' theory of "industrial development eliminating class contradictions" is simply another way of stating the basic tenets of the revisionists, which is that the advance of the productive forces alone eliminates the need for revolution. Now, in the U.S. "peaceful transition" to socialism is possible without the leadership of the revolutionary party of the working class.

The difference is that where the CP puts forth the theory of "radical reforms" as alternative to revolution, Boggs view is that "Black Power" is the alternative. How Black people can achieve this power apart from the struggle of the working class, Boggs never tells us.

Boggs cannot provide answers to the burning questions facing the working class and the Black liberation struggle today because Boggs has thrown out the science of Marxism-Leninism. Only Marxism, combined with a concrete analysis of conditions in this country, will show the way to working class unity, Black liberation and socialism.