

# COMMUNICATIONS

Alberto Moreau

## An Unfortunate Omission

In the November issue of *Political Affairs*, page 21, there is a quotation by Lenin explaining the reasons for the persistent prejudices held by oppressed peoples toward oppressing nations. Lenin's deep insight into this question is applicable to the present epoch, which is characterized by the stormy awakening of hundreds of millions struggling for genuine independence, progress and well-being, and by the need to understand the manifestations of nationalism as an inevitable accompaniment of the struggle for national independence.

Unfortunately, by omitting the two sentences preceding the quotation, Lenin's thought is rendered one-sided and to a degree mutilated. Your quotation very correctly explains the causes for national narrowness, such as small-scale agricultural production, patriarchalism and ignorance, and points out that it will disappear "with the disappearance of imperialism and capitalism." Hence Lenin urges the treatment of the survivals of nationalism and distrust with special caution, etc. However, the omitted sentences which are part

of a whole paragraph embodying a full concept, expound additional reasons for the distrust, anger, etc., very important to bear in mind especially today. These sentences are:

The age-long oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has imbued the toiling masses of the oppressed countries, not only with anger, but also with distrust toward the proletariat of those nations. The despicable betrayal of Socialism by the majority of official leaders of the proletariat in 1914-19, when "defense of the fatherland" was used as a cloak to conceal the defense of the "right" of "their" bourgeoisie to oppress colonies and rob financially dependent countries could not but increase this quite legitimate distrust. On the other hand. . . ." (Here your quotation begins.—A. M.).

Now, it is no accident that Lenin begins his thesis with the above-mentioned sentences. He did not ascribe nationalism only to the economic backwardness of the weak nations, but *also* to the evils of imperialist domination, its savage pillage, racism and inhuman treatment. It is to the credit of many African leaders who distrust imperialism that at the same time

they combat national narrowness. Thus, Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana, declares emphatically that Africa for the Africans does not mean chauvinism or isolationism, nor does this slogan exclude other races. The brutal American imperialist intervention in South Vietnam and the Congo cannot but strengthen distrust and anger on the part of these brave peoples who face daily fire, destruction and devastation of their countries. Under these conditions, this intervention is the main factor that exacerbates and, in many instances, gives rise to the national prejudices referred to by Lenin.

The other factor is the role of the Right-wing of Social-Democratic officialdom that today supports colonialism. The Belgian

Socialist Spaak is an example. His counterparts are the Meanys and Dubinskys who play a nefarious role of subverting the trade unions of Africa and Latin America, spending millions of dollars to achieve the aim of hindering trade union participation in the struggles for national liberation. Some of the international unions play a similar role in Puerto Rico. They control the majority of the unions, act as overseas bosses and do their best to keep them away from the rising movements for independence.

The profound lesson we can learn from Lenin's theses is his call for proletarian internationalism and our responsibilities flowing from it.

## The Editors Agree

Alberto Moreau's point that the omission of two sentences from the Lenin quotation gives a one-sided interpretation to the essence of Lenin's thesis is well taken. With the inclusion of the two sentences the quotation would read:

The age-long oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has imbued the toiling masses of the oppressed countries, not only with anger, but also with distrust toward the oppressing nations in general, including the proletariat of those nations. The despicable betrayal of Socialism by the majority of the official leaders of the proletariat in 1914-19, when "defense of the fatherland"

was used as a social-chauvinist cloak to conceal the defense of the "right" of "their" bourgeoisie to oppress colonies and rob financially dependent countries, could not but increase this quite legitimate distrust. On the other hand, the more backward a country is, the stronger in it are small agricultural production, patriarchalism and ignorance, which inevitably cause the deepest of petty-bourgeois prejudices, viz., the prejudices of national egoism and national narrowness, to become particularly strong and tenacious. In view of the fact that these prejudices can disappear only after the disappearance of imperialism and capitalism in the advanced countries, and after a radical change has taken place in the whole foun-

dation of the economic life of the backward countries, the process of extinction of these prejudices cannot but be very slow. Hence, it is the duty of the class-conscious Communist proletariat of all countries to treat the survival of national sentiments among the countries and nationalities which have been oppressed for the longest periods with special caution and special attention, and it is also necessary to make certain concessions with the view to rapidly removing the aforementioned distrust and the aforementioned prejudices. . . .

This correction is of particular importance for us in the United States, not only because U.S. imperialism arrogantly intervenes in the internal affairs of the countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa, but also because within our own boundaries we have the

continued national oppression of 20,000,000 Negro Americans.

To the extent that the working class, and in the first place the Left, fully understands the material justification for the distrust and suspicion of oppressed peoples, often carried over to all members of the dominant oppressing nation, will it recognize its responsibility for waging a relentless struggle against great power chauvinism, jingoism, white supremacy and racism. Such a struggle is a necessary foundation for advancing the unity of Negro and white at home and for arousing the American people in the fight against U.S. imperialism's efforts to impede the victory of national liberation movements abroad.

At the basis of Communism there is this simple and passionate belief: that the scientific and technical intelligence which we have at our disposal in the Western World . . . in the hands of men who love the human race, could reorganize the entire economic structure of the world so as to overcome the world-wide struggle for existence and build up a working population regardless of race, creed or nationality, which could feed and clothe and house its children without taking anything by violence from the human soul. . . .

Dr. Mordecai Johnson in a speech at the 1941 CIO Convention