

REPORT FROM NATIONAL PLANNING CONFERENCE: Year To Pull The Covers Off Imperialism Project

A group of black intellectuals—teachers, students, workers, journalists, professionals, movement activists from across the U.S.—have declared themselves firmly against U.S. imperialism in a meeting of the National Planning Conference of the Year to Pull the Covers Off Imperialism Project, held at Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., January 10-12, 1975.

The conference unanimously adopted "A Declaration Against Imperialism" which stated: "The exposure and defeat of the revolting and shameless hypocrisy of U.S. imperialism in all its forms must be adopted as the main objective of the historical task of black intellectuals." The Declaration emphasized this task "to prevent distortions, lies and deception by exposing U.S. imperialism" in view of the upcoming USA Bicentennial Celebration. The Declaration Against Imperialism is expected to be published, circulated, discussed, and endorsed by many organizations, publications, and individuals in the black liberation movement.

Participants in the conference came from California, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas. Among the colleges and universities represented were Atlanta University, Cornell, Fisk, Meharry, North Carolina Central, North Carolina A&T, Northern Illinois University, Spelman, Stanford, State University of New York (Albany and Old Westbury), Tennessee State, and Wayne State University.

Conference participants represented many organizations: February First Movement, Black Economic Research Center, African Information Service, Association of Black Psychologists, African Heritage Studies Association, National Conference of Black Political Scientists, African Liberation Support Committee, A. Phillip Randolph Institute, African Association for Black Studies, and the Association for the Study of Behavioral Sciences. Journalists from *The African World*, *The Black Scholar*, the *Review of Black Political Economy*, National Black Network, and the *St. Petersburg Times* also attended.

The Conference opened with a session on "Black Intellectuals and the Black Liberation Movement: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives." Talks were given by St. Clair Drake of Stanford University and Abdul Alkalimat of Peoples College and Fisk University. The workshop speakers were Robert Allen of *The Black Scholar* on "National Liberation Movements," Ebon Dooley of Atlanta on "Socialism," and Ernie Mkalimoto of the University of Massachusetts on "Imperialism and Black People." Responding to the workshop presentations were S. E. Anderson of S.U.N.Y.

(Old Westbury), Ron Bailey of Peoples College and Alex Willingham of Atlanta University. Workshop moderators included Ayanna of Local 19-A, DWA, Dorothy Stewart of Tennessee State University, and Lucius Outlaw of Fisk University.

Participants on the panel during the general discussion on the Declaration Against Imperialism were: James Turner of Cornell University and the African Heritage Studies Association, Shelby Smith and Malcolm Suber of Atlanta University, and Robert Newby of Wayne State University. Robert Browne of the *Review of Black Political Economy*, Jerry Walker of the *African World*, and Robert Allen of *The Black Scholar* spoke on the role of their publications in the black liberation movement and how they could support the conference in their on-going work.

The final talk was given by Bill Epton of New York, who spoke on "The Role of the Black Intellectual in Struggle: An Activist's View." Epton summed up the lessons of 25 years of practical experience in the struggles, discussed the major political errors made by black intellectuals, and how black intellectuals should integrate with the black masses to better serve the people in today's struggle against U.S. imperialism.

The summing-up session witnessed a spirited discussion of the National Planning Conference and practical steps to implement the general program of the Year to Pull the Covers Off Imperialism. It was stated that the practical outcome of the conference involves several key areas of work:

1—Development of model anti-imperialist study outlines (e.g. for use as college course outlines) in the areas of: (A) Introduction to Black Studies; (B) Political Economy of black people; (C) The Arts and Humanities of black people; (D) 20th Century black liberation struggle.

2—Support for the Declaration Against Imperialism: (A) Reprinting and distributing it wherever and whenever possible; (B) Obtaining endorsements from organizations, publications and individuals; (C) Using it as the basis for planning programs and activities.

3—Reorientation of our work style: (A) Research and dissertation topics related to imperialism and black people; (B) Involvement in the black liberation movement; (C) Support for the struggles of working people, and national liberation struggles; (D) Support for the rising anti-imperialist student movement.

Copies of the Conference proceedings and the Declaration Against Imperialism are available by writing: National Coordinating Committee, Year to Pull the Covers Off Imperialism Project, P.O. Box 5747, Nashville, Tenn. 37208.

Following is the full text of the Declaration:

A DECLARATION AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Adopted at the National Planning Conference
PULL THE COVERS OFF IMPERIALISM PROJECT

Fisk University Nashville, Tn.

January 11, 1975

Today the world is plunging headlong into crisis. The prosperity and world domination of the USA is being challenged and exposed as the center of an exploiting imperialist system. Capitalist exploitation shaped the historical experience of black people during European colonization and chattel slavery. Today capitalism is in the imperialist stage of monopoly control by international financial institutions and multinational corporations. Consideration of both of these stages of capitalist exploitation pinpoints the underlying target of the black liberation movement over the last century of struggle. Once again it is time for black intellectuals to speak out—to raise our voices in a rising chorus that lays bare the true character of U.S. imperialism, and unites our work with the movement for black liberation.

Imperialism is a system that is based on intense economic exploitation, national and racial oppression, and political repression. One of the tools for maintaining imperialism is cultural domination through control of educational institutions and the mass media. The development of the world imperialist system has led to a general crisis affecting all aspects of society, leaving no nation, country, or people free of its destructive impact. However, imperialism, though dangerous, is a dying system, for where there is exploitation and oppression there is resistance and struggle. People are fighting for economic security, overall improvement of their living standards, freedom, justice, and equality which ultimately requires a new social order. This is the trend of world history, and black people in the USA are no exception. Countries want independence, nations want liberation and people want revolution.

As the USA moves toward the Bicentennial Celebration of its existence it is the historical responsibility of black intellectuals to prevent distortions, lies and deception by exposing U.S. imperialism. Over 100 years ago (on July 4, 1852 in Rochester, New York) Frederick Douglass set the pace when he clearly exposed "the great sin and shame of America":

What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty an unholy license; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns; your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation of the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of these United States at this very hour.

The exposure and defeat of the "revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy" of U.S. imperialism in all its forms must be adopted today as the main objective of the historical task of black intellectuals.

The economic crisis of the world capitalist system is intensifying, and adds up to an all-sided attack on the living standards of the people in the USA, especially the working class and oppressed peoples—Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Asians, and Native Americans. Our task is to expose the essence of this crisis by demonstrating who benefits from imperialism and who is exploited by imperialism—how and why, and how all the reforms now under discussion have historically failed to be more than short term measures that deal with symptoms of the economic crisis and not its fundamental cause. The current ineffectiveness of these reforms, such as during the Great Depression, characterized this problem.

One of the main manifestations of the world character of imperialism is the striving of the U.S. ruling class for hegemony in every region of the world. The U.S. government and corporations, aided by the foundations, universities and mass media, have extended to all corners of the globe so that the sun never sets on U.S. imperialism. But just as when that description was applied to the British empire and was ended by the forces of national liberation after WWII, so the forces of liberation and revolution are bringing down U.S. imperialism as demonstrated by the victorious war won by the heroic Vietnamese people and the defeat of U.S.-backed Portuguese Colonialism in Africa. Our struggles in the USA have also been blows against imperialism, like the struggle at Attica, the Oneita Textile strike and the struggle at Wounded Knee. A key role of black intellectuals, literally located within the belly of U.S. monopoly capitalism, is to turn the character of U.S. imperialism inside out, pulling off the covers that conceal it, and attacking it on its ideological front.

As the black liberation movement spreads and reflects the revolutionary aspirations of the masses of black people, there also develops a great need for black intellectuals to become politically relevant. This is a crucial mandate for all students, teachers, journalists, professionals, artists, and writers. But a black intellectual cannot be defined simply by an occupational role or by formal education. *Black intellectuals who will make meaningful contributions to the fight against imperialism are people who have developed adequate theoretical skill grounded in a critical social analysis of the oppression of black people and of U.S. imperialism; are able to sum up the concrete conditions of a problem by discovering the logical pattern and main aspects of the problem; integrate this summation with established revolutionary theoretical principles, and creatively apply the lessons learned to contribute to solving the problems that black people face and which exist for the entire society.* Examples of this commitment include W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Malcolm X, and Oliver Cox.

Moreover, our theory must not only be rooted in a scientific approach to understanding the complex nature of U.S. society, and the historical development of U.S. imperialism, but also in a commitment to use such theory as a weapon in the struggle against imperialism. This includes refuting the theories of racial inferiority being put forward by professors in major U.S. universities, the intellectual justifications for anti-people programs constituting "benign neglect," and the educational programs that slow down the intellectual advancement of the masses of people.

Therefore, we black intellectuals must organize ourselves and forge unity around the historical condition of the people, and around the intellectual, moral, and political imperatives for our work:

WE DECLARE that a primary task of black intellectuals today is to study the character and historical development of U.S. imperialism, especially its impact on black people, and to promote this study throughout schools, publications, conferences, and organizations;

WE DECLARE that the main objective of our study must be to expose the essence of imperialism and provide the intellectual tools necessary for combating every imperialist assault on the people;

WE DECLARE that our immediate goal is to establish a new unity between black intellectuals and the black liberation movement in which intellectuals function to serve the interests of the people with humility based on compassion, strength, based on science, and a revolutionary optimism that the people will triumph over all enemies and prosper.

**FURTHER THE ANALYSIS THROUGH STUDY AND
HEIGHTEN THE CONTRADICTIONS THROUGH STRUGGLE!!**