Neo-Garveyism—New "Back-to-Africa" Movements

Among the latest petty-bourgeois movements are several new editions of Garveyism—neo-Garveyism, Negro Zionism. For example: The Nationalist Movement for the Establishment of a Forty-Ninth State (headquarters in Chicago). In its program, the leaders of this organization cite the various proscriptions suffered by the Negro masses in this country, displacements under the N.R.A., etc., concluding that all of this is natural and inevitable. Therefore, they propose that "the Federal government acquire a territory from the existent States (adequate in size and fertile in soil) and dispose of this land and its resources to Negroes willing to settle."

This Jim-Crow defeatist scheme, according to its leaders, will not only solve the Negro question, but, we are informed, *"will do much to relieve the economic stress throughout the country due to the vast oversupply of workers who can't find work"*.

Another movement of this type, also originating in Chicago, is the Peace Movement to Liberia. The leaders of this organization claim 4,000,000 members who have signed a petition addressed to the President, asking that the government pay the expenses of transportation to Liberia, or Ethiopia, to settle. The signers of the petition, according to the leaders, state that "they hold themselves in readiness to be eliminated from the impossibly competitive labor market here, by transportation in government transports to Africa". Further, the release states, "an exodus of the poorest people will benefit *both races, improve labor conditions for those remaining and promote the long-deferred economic recovery*". But to leave no doubt in the minds of their imperialist masters as to the peaceful, non-revolutionary character of this movement, of its utter subservience to imperialism,

particularly to American imperialism, and that the support of this reactionary scheme entails no complications with foreign imperialist powers, the leaders make it clear that they are not out to set up an independent State. Oh, no! Their intention is merely to become "law-abiding citizens under the government to which they migrate—be it either Liberia or Abyssinia".

These two movements, calling for mass exodus either to Liberia or to a Jim-Crow Forty-Ninth State within the country, have in common the same reactionary features. The mass migration of Negroes is presented not only as a solution of the Negro problem, but as a step towards the solution of the question of unemployment for the white toilers. *This shows a complete acceptance by the petty-bourgeois traitors at the head of these movements of the Negro-baiting doctrines of the fascist demagogues of the K.K.K., Black Shirts, White Legion, etc. These fascists also maintain that the Negro toilers are responsible for the sufferings of the white toilers in the South. On the basis of this, they seek to dupe the backward white workers into support of all sorts of reactionary provocations against Negroes.*

It is clear, therefore, that these schemes of the Negro petty-bourgeois nationalist leaders fit precisely into the whole program of the fascist lynchers and aid in the development of fascism. In these utopian plans held forth as solutions for the ills confronting the Negro masses in this country, there exists an objective basis for an alliance between fascism and neo-Garveyism against the struggle of the Negro masses for national liberation, against the revolutionary movement in general.

The Liberian Plan and U. S. Imperialism

But the most subtle and refined edition of neo-Garveyism, and therefore the most dangerous, is seen in the so-called *Liberian-American Plan.* The movement around this plan

is being initiated by certain Negro petty-bourgeois nationalist groups in London, Paris, and the U. S. A., with the help and leadership of certain Negro renegades from Communism. Foremost among these latter is the renegade Padmore, who is undoubtedly the ideological head of the whole movement. The chief spokesman for this plan among American Negroes is none other than William N. Jones of the *Baltimore Afro-American,* our erstwhile "fellow traveler" during the 1932 Presidential Election Campaign. Undoubtedly Mr. Jones found the program of revolutionary struggle advocated by the Communist Party too rocky a road for his wavering petty-bourgeois feet. In his quest for an "easier way", he found a guide in the renegade Padmore.

Mr. Jones, it will be remembered, has just returned from a "good will mission" to Liberia. In conversation with Liberian government officials during his stay there, the basis of a plan for the "assistance" of Liberia by the Negro people in the U. S. A. and other parts of the world was worked out. Returning from Liberia via London, Mr. Jones was drawn into conference with the above-mentioned groups and the plan was further developed and rounded out.

Let us briefly review the situation in Liberia in order to get a clear idea of the counter-revolutionary nature of the proposed plan. The so-called Independent Republic of Liberia has long been a virtual colony of United States imperialism. American imperialism, represented chiefly by Harvey Firestone interests, completely dominates the main economic and financial resources of the country. The inhabitants of Liberia can be divided into two main groups: (1) the indigenous population numbering about 2,000,000 and composed of various tribes, and (2) about 20,000 Americo-Liberians, Negroes who are descendants of American ex-slaves. These settled in the country during the early days of colonization. This latter group comprises the native

bourgeois and intellectual classes, chiefly occupied as trading capitalists, plantation owners, and government officials. This Americanized Black bourgeoisie in alliance with the native chiefs has set itself up as an oligarchy, imposing its will upon the native population. Its government at Monrovia, represented at present by President Barclay, acts as policeman for the interests of American imperialism and the Harvey Firestone Corporation in the country.

Although American finance capital long ago invaded Liberia, its economic and political grip upon the Liberian people was finally clinched through the agreement between the Liberian government and Harvey Firestone Corp., concluded in 1925. By the terms of this robber agreement, Liberia was definitely reduced to a vassal State of Wall Street imperialism. The terms of this agreement were as follows: (1) The Firestone Corp. secured a concession of 1,000,000 acres of rubber-producing land. This land, which will produce a crop of 250,000 tons of rubber per year, was leased for the ridiculous price of 6 cents an acre. (2) The Firestone Corp., through its agent, the American Finance Corp., of New York City, forced a loan of $5,000,000 upon the Liberian people at the rate of 7 per cent interest. (3) The agreement further stipulated, as security for this loan, that the control of customs as well as the internal revenues of the country be placed in the hands of an American Financial Advisor. This Advisor was to control the disbursements of the loan, of which according to the terms, half was to be expended for the construction of railways, motor roads, improvement of the harbor, etc. (public works). Of course, this provision has as its primary purpose to facilitate the imperialistic exploitation of the rubber monopoly by Harvey Firestone interests. The other half of this money was to be used to pay off "certain" outstanding public debts. These public debts were none other than the International Loan

forced upon Liberia by American, British, and German bankers in 1912, at the instance of American imperialism. The carrying through of this imperialist project of large scale rubber plantations has necessarily been accompanied by wholesale expropriation of native tribal lands which have been turned over to Harvey Firestone. The natives, forcibly ejected from their lands, have been converted into colonial wage slaves. In this imperialist banditry, the Liberian government has been the main instrument of the imperialists. A number of uprisings on the part of the natives in resistance to these encroachments have been brutally suppressed by the Liberian Military Force.

In this manner, American imperialism, operating through the machinations of the corrupt native bourgeois politicians, was able to secure a stranglehold over the resources of the country and reduce the Liberian masses to downright colonial slavery.

The economic crisis and the imperialist offensive taking place against this background is having the most ruinous effects. The strengthening of imperialist oppression has led to widespread unrest among the Liberian toilers. The deepening revolutionary ferment among the masses has been expressed in a series of sporadic revolts among the native tribes in the hinterland as well as strikes among the Kroos (seamen in the coastal regions). These revolutionary demonstrations are taking place against the vicious system of colonial taxation and forced labor recruitment carried through by the native bourgeois puppets of American imperialism. The continued draining of the country's finances by the Wall Street bandits has resulted in a severe financial crisis, as reflected in the enormous deficit in the national budget. This situation, the deepening of the economic and financial crisis on the one hand, and the growing rebellion of the masses on the other hand, has precipitated a crisis in

the Liberian upper classes. The governmental crisis was brought to a head in the ousting of former President King and his replacement by President Barclay.

In these difficulties, the Liberian government not only defaulted in the payment of the loan contracted with the American Finance Corp., demanding modifications of the terms of this loan, but requested a further loan. This request was rejected by the American government and the Harvey Firestone interests, which insisted upon Liberia's living up to the terms of the original agreement. In a maneuver to strengthen its position, and to exert pressure upon the American government to modify its demands, the new Liberian government sought to utilize the conflict between American and British imperialism regarding the Liberian rubber monopoly. In this the Liberian government embarked upon a policy of flirting with the League of Nations, tool of British and French imperialism. The League of Nations in its turn sought to utilize this controversy between the Liberian bourgeoisie and American imperialism to further the aims of British and French imperialism in Liberia. Therefore, upon the appearance of the representative of the Liberian government before that body, he was informed that the League could give no assistance unless the demands of American imperialism were modified. Feeling strengthened by this "support", the Liberian Legislature forthwith declared a moratorium on the American debt. The American government and Harvey Firestone interests immediately responded by raising the charge of "slave traffic" in Liberia. By this it sought to discredit the Barclay government and to place in power those sections of the Liberian bourgeoisie more amenable to its claims. But the League of Nations, not ready to defy American imperialism on this question, soon arrived at a mutual understanding with the latter. Therefore the "League of Nations Plan of Assistance

for Liberia", the final outcome of these maneuvers, actually incorporates the claims of American imperialism and the Harvey Firestone interests.

The Liberian bourgeoisie, defeated in its maneuver, was now forced to turn once more to American imperialism, raising again the question of modification of the demands of the latter. But American imperialism still insists upon strict adherence by the Liberian government to the terms of the original agreement.

The Liberian bourgeoisie is now seeking to use the Negro question in the United States for the purpose of exerting "pressure" upon American imperialism to bring about a modification of its demands and also to help it out of its financial difficulties generally. This is the situation behind the so-called "Liberian-American Plan of Cooperation" proposed by Mr. William N. Jones. This plan is in fact a proposal for an alliance between the Liberian government and the Negro bourgeois and petty-bourgeois groups in America for the purpose of rallying mass support for the Liberian bourgeoisie in its reactionary bargaining with American imperialism and at the same time, to secure financial help for the Liberian government among the Negroes in the United States. This is clearly shown in a "confidential" prospectus sent out by Mr. William N. Jones. The basis of this proposed alliance between the Liberian government and the Negro bourgeois groups in the U. S. A. is a plan for a business partnership between these two groups for the joint promotion of business enterprises and industries in Liberia and in the U. S. A. In other words, the Liberian bourgeoisie agrees to let its American Negro class brothers "in on the spoils" accruing from the plunder of the Liberian masses. Thus, the proposed program calls for nationwide organization around the following points:

"1. The organization by this present committee of a permanent commission to work with a similar commission appointed by the

Liberian government in coordinating a permanent Liberian-American plan of cooperation and of maintaining the proper relations between the governments of the two countries.

"2. The organization of a Liberian-American trading company. The Liberian government would cooperate with such a company in establishing a banking and insurance business and agencies in both countries which would promote trade between the two countries.

"3. The establishment of a number of scholarships in our institutions which would train young men and women for Liberian and other foreign service. There are at present sixty diplomatic posts which Liberia controls in foreign countries, most of which are filled by white persons. President Barclay has pointed out to us his desire to have these important posts filled by colored persons. These posts would form a mighty factor in working out a better status for people of color throughout the world. Young men trained as administrators, industrialists and engineers are needed at once, and under this ten-year program would be welcomed by the Liberian government.

"4. The organization of an international relations group which would seek to coordinate the efforts of colored people throughout the world to improve their general economic, social and civic status. Such an organization to be promoted mainly among younger men and women and stimulated by an educational movement which will point out to our boys and girls their relations to Liberians and colored folk in other countries."

All of this, we are informed, will be a "mighty factor in working out a better status for the Negro people throughout the world".

It is quite clear that the American Negro bourgeoisie sees in this plan an opportunity to attain realization of its long cherished dreams for industrial expansion. This is expressed in the most enthusiastic terms by Mr. Jones in his column in the *Baltimore Afro-American*. He says:

"We are beating our hearts and souls trying to break through the thick walls of prejudice which bar us from the higher brackets of big industry here in America, when there is a virgin field which we could develop in Africa."

To carry through their part of the agreement, the American group undertakes the following:

1. The development of a mass campaign to bring pressure upon the United States government to modify its demands on Liberia. This campaign is already under way and is being accompanied by the most cunning demagogy. The cry is being raised that "the integrity and freedom of Liberia is being menaced by England and France". Whereas, in fact, the League of Nations Plan, which, as we have seen, really represents the interests of American imperialism and Harvey Firestone, is cunningly represented as a threat against Liberian "independence", not by American imperialism, but by British and French imperialism. The campaign is being accompanied by strenuous appeals to race solidarity, unity of the darker races; hypocritical pleas are being made to the Negro peoples to rally to the defense of the "last stronghold of Negro freedom", etc., etc.

2. This campaign is to be connected with the raising of $150,000 among the Negro masses in this country "to assist the Liberian government in its present difficulties". This, we are informed, will show "good faith on the part of the American Negro in his desire to help Liberia".

3. These pretentious schemes are to be carried through by a "nationwide organization comprising the heads of all organizations now interested in Liberia, also churches, lodges, civic and business organizations", on the basis of a Ten-Year Program. The next immediate step is the organization of a delegation of "prominent" Negroes to intercede with President Roosevelt and the State Department on "behalf" of Liberia and to persuade them to accept the above Plan in lieu of the Plan of the League of Nations.

Let us examine the rosy utopia presented in this program. Does this plan actually aim at the freedom of the Liberian people? Let us see.

This Liberian-American movement, which parades under

the slogan of "freedom of Liberia", is in actuality but a scheme for fastening the yoke of American imperialism and its reactionary bourgeois puppets still tighter upon the backs of the Liberian masses. It is an attempt to deceive the Negro toilers in the U. S. A. into a scheme directed to maintain the subjugation of the Liberian people by American imperialism. At the same time, under the cloak of promoting the welfare of the Negro masses in the United States, the Liberian-American Plan is but another device on the part of the Negro bourgeoisie to further their own reactionary class interests at the expense of the masses of Negro toilers.

Let us have no illusions. The strivings of the Negro bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois intellectuals for economic expansion are not directed against American imperialism; on the contrary, every one of these schemes fully coincides with the interests of American imperialism. The Negro bourgeoisie fully understands that its class interests are bound up with the maintenance of American imperialism, that its only hope for development is under the wings of the latter. Therefore, the supporters of this plan do not question the right of American imperialism as chief slaveholder of the Liberian masses; on the contrary, the carrying through of the Plan includes the active support of American imperialism, which, in their own terms, is depicted as a "Big brother of the Liberian people". William N. Jones and his friends merely offer their services together with the Liberian bourgeoisie as overseers of American imperialist interests in Liberia. Thus the Liberian-American Plan is an active instrument for the further expansion of American imperialism in Liberia as well as in Africa as a whole. Mr. Jones makes this very clear in his column in the *Baltimore Afro-American*. He says:

". . . if *our own 'brain trust'* in Washington is alert, it will make a strenuous effort to see that our government takes enough

interest in the *keeping of an open trade door in Africa. . . .*" [My emphasis—H.H.]

Thus behind this whole utopian scheme stand the bayonets and warships of American imperialism! It is Negro Zionism in its most subtle and refined form. Although lacking the primitiveness of Garvey's "Negro Kingdom", it nevertheless contains all the reactionary features of the latter. It is a counter-revolutionary movement aimed to divert the Negro masses from struggle against imperialism.

Padmore—Theoretician of Neo-Garveyism

But this is not all. To strengthen its mass appeal the proponents of this reactionary utopian project seek to cover it with a cloak of pseudo-Communist phrases. Undoubtedly this has been furnished by the renegade Padmore. We are informed that the intentions of Mr. Jones and his friends are to build up eventually a Negro Socialist State in Liberia! They would have us believe that the situation in Liberia is such that it is possible to achieve this without revolutionary struggle against imperialism and its native bourgeois lackeys. In support of this false theory they advance the following argument: (1) That the native tribal organization in the Liberian hinterland is really Communistic in form, that the native tribal councils are themselves a form of village Soviets! (2) That a native capitalist class is non-existent in Liberia in as much as the native upper classes are neither industrialists nor financiers. "They are even friendly to Communism!" Therefore, the question of freedom of Liberia according to these people, is reduced to the simple question of buying off American imperialism and Harvey Firestone and the introduction of Socialism without a struggle.

First, in regard to the contention that the native tribal system is Communistic, that the tribal councils are actually a form of Soviets, etc. What are the facts? The facts are,

that the primitive tribal institutions of the natives are now being artificially preserved and perpetuated by imperialism and used as instruments for the imperialist exploitation and oppression of the masses. The chiefs, who formerly held their authority on the basis of the popular will of the tribe, have now not only become, in most cases, landlords and usurers (having with the aid of the imperialists stolen large tracts of the tribal lands), but active agents of imperialism in the Liberian hinterland. Not only are they tax gatherers for the Liberian government, but they act also as recruiters of forced labor for the plantations of Harvey Firestone. Their authority is now imposed on the native tribesmen at the point of bayonets of the *Liberian Constabulary.*

It is this system of robbery which is depicted by Padmore and his friends as "resembling village Soviets", as "Communistic in form"! What is the purpose of this fraud? Its purpose is to hide the brutal plunder of the Liberian masses by United States imperialism and its native lackeys. At the same time, this idea that the native tribal system is Communistic, that the native tribesmen are "natural Communists", etc., is another attempt to revive the reactionary theory advanced by the old Russian Populists, the idea against which Lenin fought; namely, that the peasantry are the leading class in the struggle for Socialism. Translated to the situation in Liberia, this theory means not only the denial of the role of the native working class as bearers of Socialism. It also means the denial of the role of the Liberian working class as the chief driving force in the fight for national independence against imperialism.

The issue brings up the question of primitive Communism. Padmore et al., claim for Liberia a Communist economic and social form—of primitive Communism. In the first place, the status of primitive communism cannot be applied to a territory or people living under the yoke of imperialism. But,

even if we left this out of the argument, what is the renegade Padmore trying to do? He is trying treacherously to confound primitive Communism with scientific Communism, only with the purpose of showing that there is no need for revolutionary struggle, since, as he tries to befuddle the Negro toilers, "we have already Communism in Liberia". But any class-conscious worker knows that scientific Communism is the ultimate stage of development through class struggle, from the insufficiency of primitive Communism to the economic and cultural plenty of scientific Communism, when the means and the high level of production developed under capitalism will have become socialized after the revolutionary seizure of power by the working class.

Secondly, regarding the contention that in Liberia there is no active capitalist class, that the Liberian upper classes are sympathetic to Communism. This, of course, is a downright lie. True, in Liberia there is no real native *industrial* bourgeoisie. The Liberian upper class, the descendants of American slaves, live chiefly in the coastal towns and are engaged mainly in trading and usury. This class in alliance with the native chiefs have established themselves as an oligarchy over the indigenous tribes in the interior. Their government in Monrovia has become a "policeman" for imperialism in the robbery and rape of the Liberian masses. At the behest of American imperialism they have carried through the forceful expropriation of the tribal lands of the natives which have been turned over to the imperialist enterprises, Harvey Firestone Rubber Plantations, etc. They are the chief recruiting agencies for Harvey Firestone. They impose oppressive taxes and fines of all kinds on the native population. But this is not all; they are actively engaged in slave traffic, recruiting slaves among the native masses for the Portuguese slave traders. Moreover, they have carried out a series of bloody punitive expeditions against the

numerous rebellions of the natives in the interior. It is these parasites and slave dealers, these murderers of the Liberian masses which Padmore and his friends seek to represent as sympathetic to Communism! Thus the whole system of slavish oppression and torture of the Liberian people by imperialism and its lackeys is sanctioned in the name of Socialism!

Finally, contained in this whole reactionary theory of establishment of Socialism in Liberia without a revolutionary struggle, is a crude attempt to distort a fundamental thesis of our Leninist program on the national colonial question, namely, the possibility of the "non-capitalist path of development for the colonies". Marxism-Leninism teaches us that it is possible for the colonies and backward nations to avoid the capitalist stage of development and pass over directly to Socialism on the basis of a victorious revolution in the advanced imperialistic countries. This has been brilliantly confirmed in the Soviet Union. Under the leadership of the victorious working class in the Soviet Union, scores of oppressed peoples, kept in the most primitive backwardness by the centuries-old oppression of Czarism, have experienced in the sixteen years since the October Revolution unparalleled economic and cultural development. Under the leadership of the proletarian dictatorship and the workers' and farmers' government in the Soviet Union, these peoples were guided from the most backward and slavish conditions on to the road of Socialism, completely avoiding the whole bloody, torturous stage of capitalism.

On the basis of the Soviet example, it is clear that the avoidance of the capitalist stage of development by the colonial peoples is possible only on the basis of revolutionary struggle on the part of the masses in the colonial countries for national independence, in alliance with the working class of the advanced countries, for the overthrow of the im-

perialist yoke. Certainly not on the basis of a reactionary compromise with imperialism as proposed by Padmore and his friends.

Padmore's complete desertion from Communism to the camp of petty-bourgeois nationalism is further revealed in his recent articles. In the article, "Ethiopia Today", published in the anthology, *Negro,* edited by Nancy Cunard, Padmore, with the enthusiasm of the most frantic Garvey leader, extols the "virtues" of the Emperor of Abyssinia and the "progress" and "advancement" of the Abyssinian people under his "enlightened" rule. In this he blurs over class lines among the Abyssinian people and represents the reactionary slave-holding feudal ruling classes, allies of imperialism, as a progressive factor in the country. At the same time in this article he gives support to the reactionary petty-bourgeois idea of race against race. The defeat of Italy at the hands of Abyssinia at the end of the last century is represented by Padmore not as a defeat of Italian imperialism by the Abyssinian people, but as a defeat of the "white race at arms". It is small wonder, therefore, that in the same article Padmore also gives support to the counter-revolutionary idea of Japan as the "champion of the dark races". Padmore characterizes the recent commercial treaty between Japan and Abyssinia as "an alliance which might have tremendous and far-reaching importance not only for Ethiopia but for all *Black Africa*". This same petty-bourgeois line is continued in his articles on Africa appearing in the recent issues of the *Baltimore Afro-American.* In regard to the increasing plunder of the African peoples by imperialism, Padmore exclaims: *"White Europe* is killing Africa!" Truly, petty-bourgeois nationalism has found a wily spokesman in George Padmore. He undoubtedly stands out as the chief theoretician of neo-Garveyism.

In what consists the counter-revolutionary kernel of all these neo-Garveyist movements?

1. By holding forth the reactionary utopia of escape from oppression by peaceful migration, they tend to draw the masses of Negroes out of the struggles for their rights in the U. S. A. against the white ruling class, thus disarming them in the face of growing fascist reaction and national oppression.

2. At the same time, through their emphasis on the petty-bourgeois nationalist slogans of race solidarity, race unity, etc., as opposed to the class solidarity of the Negro and white toilers, as against the revolutionary alliance of the Negro people and white working class, for the overthrow of the common oppressor—imperialism—they tend to strengthen the division between Negro and white and in this manner hinder the formation of a common front of the toilers against the rising fascist offensive.