

United States of America: Revising its History and Exceptionalism

By Pravda.ru

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The United States of America is revising history textbooks, while abandoning the idea of exceptionalism of the American nation. At first, the White House caused a commotion among the Republicans, who then made ordinary Americans worry. The Republicans are unhappy with the criticism of American history, while ordinary Americans are concerned about the ban on free protests in the country.

As it turns out, the United States, like any other country, has something to be ashamed of, a new history textbook for high schools (Advanced Placement US history course) says. For example, the book criticizes the nuclear bombing of Japan.

A Republican candidate for presidential elections in 2016, Ben Carson, told Fox News that many of those, who will complete the new course on history, would be ready to join the Islamic State, which the United States is now bombing in Syria and Iraq.

“There’s only two paragraphs in there about George Washington. George Washington! Believe it or not. Little or nothing about Dr. Martin Luther King.” As examples of the negative bias, he mentioned “a whole section on slavery and how evil [Americans] are,” the killing of millions of Japanese with two atomic bombs in World War II, and other events. “We have got to stop crucifying ourselves,” he argued. “Have we made mistakes as a nation? Of course we have. Why? Because we’re people. And all people make mistakes.”

“I think most people when they finish that course, they’d be ready to go sign up for ISIS,” he said. “I mean, this is what we’re doing to the young people in our nation.”

Last month, the Republican National Committee of the United States passed a resolution, in which the textbook was described as “a radical revisionist look at American history that emphasizes negative aspects of our country’s history, omitting or minimizing positive aspects.” The Republicans urged the board that introduced the Advanced Placement (AP) history curriculum to postpone the introduction for one year, until the textbook is revised.

The AP is a federal program, but each State approves it with recommendations. The authorities of the State of Colorado sent the following recommendations to schools: “Materials should promote citizenship, patriotism, essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system, respect for authority and respect for individual rights. Materials should not encourage or condone civil disorder, social strife or disregard of the law.” In response, nearly a thousand students in Jefferson County interrupted their classes and went on a protest holding banners saying: “There is nothing more patriotic than protest” or “Education

without limitation.” The students used hashtag #JeffcoSchoolBoardHistory for organizing demonstrations. Students and their parents were protesting in the capital of Colorado, Denver, for five days, the Denver Post said.

America loves to pretend that it has nothing to hide in its history. From an American perspective, any atrocity can be justified from the point of view of the defense of American interests. This attitude fosters the so-called “American exceptionalism.” However, the “common and non-exceptional” world understands that this “exceptionalism” leads to wars and hundreds of thousands of deaths. The facts about the USA’s participation in the events in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yugoslavia, Syria, Ukraine say that this is permissiveness, rather than exceptionalism.

Here is a curious fact. US President Obama, in his recent speech at the UN General Assembly, did not say a word about the exceptionalism of the American people, although he always emphasized that in his previous speeches. Noteworthy, Advanced Placement history curriculum is used at more than 3,300 colleges and universities around the world, and its education results are used for admission to American universities. Thus, the revision of the AP history course involves influence on young people in foreign countries, who already openly mock the American “exceptionalism.”

We asked an opinion from American economist and economic observer Paul Craig Roberts, and here is what he had to say on the subject:

“The Republican Party today and a majority of Americans, who think of themselves as conservatives, are not, in fact, traditional American conservatives. They comprise a form of brownshirts who are intolerant of dissent and want to impose social control. They support government instead of the Constitution, and they frown on civil liberty as a form of legal permissiveness that coddles criminals and terrorists.

“These so-called conservatives attribute the US defeat in Vietnam to student protests and to journalists who disputed Washington’s lies. They regard protests as a threat to the status quo, and not as a way to express public dissent from government policies. Conservatives are for democracy only as long as they control behavior in the democracy.

“In the 1940s and 1950s public school courses such as history and literature were largely up to the individual teacher. Consequently, there was a lot of diversity in what was taught. As time passed, especially after the 1964 Civil Rights Act and school integration, courses became increasingly standardized, partly in order to judge school performance with standardized state or national testing, and partly, according to some, to ensure that minorities were not offended by course content. The obvious consequence is that a form of national brainwashing was put in place that instilled in the young acceptable beliefs about their country.

“For the so-called conservatives, any criticism of America is an unpatriotic act. In the 21st century it has become increasingly difficult to protest in the US. The former Director of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, declared that the new department had shifted its focus from terrorists to “domestic extremists,” a group she defined as war protesters, environmentalists, and animal rights advocates. Indeed, a national police force called Homeland Security itself indicates an increasing concern with protecting those in control from dissent. The increasing gratuitous violence of police against members of the public is also an indication that there has been a fundamental shift in the

position of the government in relation to the people. The purpose of government in the US is not to serve the will of the people, but to conform the behavior of the people to the will of the government.

“The same thing appears to be the case in Australia, Canada, the UK, and Europe. For example, in the UK, 99% of the people are opposed to fracking, but the government has ignored the people and permits fracking to take place under the homes of people without their consent. In the West, I think that the idea of democracy is dead. Democracy is no longer a respected value. Elections serve as a cloak to mask the death of democracy.”

Of course, the Obama administration has tried to improve its image a bit. After all, one and the same nation can never be right forever and ever always. However, for internal use, US officials sing different songs. They demand respect for authorities and discourage social protests. Yet, as we can see, American students want to have the right to civil disobedience. How could it be otherwise, if the government encourages all forms of popular protests in other countries, glorifying democracy? They will never teach American children, of course, that all talks of “democracy” hide a completely different principle, namely: divide and conquer.

“From my point of view, these problems speak of growing contradictions in the American society, – an expert on humanitarian issues at the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, Oksana Petrovskaya told Pravda.Ru. – For a very long time, the Americans have been propagating patriotism the American way, when America was always in the center. I would not say that with this curriculum they are moving far away from their American exceptionalism, but there is a turn being made. Now they need to take account of the interests of all social groups – blacks, women, and so on. Everyone should be represented in history, and there is no single heroic line. The line disappears and erodes. This is a trend of recent times: pay more attention to ordinary people and small social groups.”

The expert noted that after the racially motivated riots in Jefferson, it became clear that America has formed a police state with very strict orders. “I do not know what kind of waves of protests it may lead to, but the authorities are trying to root out every manifestation of protests, especially racial ones. In the USA, there is a very serious controversy based on racial grounds, and protests may happen. But the police have very extensive powers,” the expert said.

Yet, Oksana Petrovskaya believes that America will not face a large social explosion during Obama’s presidency. Well, if, let’s say, Hillary Clinton comes to power in the USA, we may well remember Obama as a good president.

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