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# WALTER RODNEY: The making of the labour force

# GUYANA

Oil, the dollar and nuclear power
The Third World and the dialectic of imperialism
Brathwaite – message to Grenada
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French racism

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WALTER RODNEY

# Guyana: the making of the labour force*

I come from the nigger yard of yesterday
Leaping from the oppressor's hate
And the scorn of myself;
From the agony of the dark hut in the shadow
And the hurt of things.

*Martin Carter*

Endemic slave revolts during the 1820s had taught the lesson that slavery as a form of control over labour was proving uneconomical and unstable.[1] Nevertheless, slavery ended when it did in the West Indies mainly because of having exhausted itself politically and economically in terms of the system of international exchange. That exhaustion brought with it a greater exposure of the local situation to international scrutiny and intervention, but it did not alter the political structures. The extent to which an alteration of legal status was transformed into substantial social change was determined by the class struggle in the post-emancipation era. Anti-slavery propaganda supposedly made the Colonial Office more anxious than ever before to act as trustee on

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*Walter Rodney*, a founder member of the Working People's Alliance of Guyana and author of *Groundings with My Brothers* (1969) and *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), was assassinated in Guyana in June 1980.

*This is a shortened version of the chapter on 'The evolution of the plantation labor force in the nineteenth century', from *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905*, to be published by Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, in Autumn 1981.

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behalf of the freed community, but in practice the metropolitan officials did very little to redress the political imbalance between planter and former slave.

In Guiana, planters who had invested in polders, land, slaves and machinery were not defeated and crushed locally by the slave masses. They remained firmly in control of the post-Emancipation legislature and were confirmed in the ownership of all property except the slaves. Thus, this dominant social class was both able and willing to maintain the realisation of profits, while making the minimum of concessions to the newly emancipated population. The latter in turn responded by continuing their struggle with the plantation owners under radically transformed legal conditions but under the same material circumstances. No major shifts in the production process were registered in British Guiana during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Cutlass, fork and shovel were the basic tools of the field; and this rudimentary technology was the basis of the piecework or taskwork organisation of labour into weeding gangs, shovel gangs, fork-moulding gangs and the like. The element of continuity was especially marked because neither of the two contending classes under slavery proved capable of sustaining a commitment to a modern system of 'free labour' in the post-Emancipation era.

Under classic capitalism, labour is 'free' in a dual sense, as elaborated upon by Marx. First, the labourer has been divested of ownership of the means of survival. In this connection, the more eloquent formulation is that of the 'naked worker' rather than the 'free worker'. Secondly, the labourer is free to sell labour as a commodity on a market comprising different employers. The worker thereby earns all of his necessary upkeep, although his surplus is of course alienated. This schema of free labour became characteristic of factory relations in capitalist centres of the nineteenth century. The young and growing capitalist system of commodity production was quite capable of extending itself via the master class of the slave society of the Americas, in spite of such precapitalist tendencies as were retained by the slave masters.[2] In the post-slavery epoch, planters were bitterly opposed to the untrammelled operation of free wage labour, while the former slaves were equally resistant to that aspect of the free labour system that demanded total alienation of workers from land ownership.

Planters discouraged the mobility of workers. They first devised the strategy of 'apprenticeship' to keep labourers tied to the estates on which they had been slaves. On the termination of apprenticeship on 1 August 1838, workers demanded more than employers were prepared to pay and they began exercising a greater degree of independence than the estates would tolerate. The struggle that resulted, and that assumed the form of protracted sugar strikes in 1842 and 1848, strengthened the determination of planters to secure immigrant labourers whose

conditions of indentured service excluded the right to seek out new employers and whose wage rates were also statutorily restricted. It is significant that the first experiment in 1838 with Indian indentured labour was terminated by the British government because of substantiated allegations as to the neo-slave nature of indentureship; and ex-slaves were among those who testified that the first Indian arrivals were treated in precisely the same manner as Africans under slavery.[3]

Less than three years after being emancipated from slavery, the new wage-earning class had begun to act in certain respects like a modern proletariat; and the first recorded strike in the history of the Guyanese working class was a success, leading to the withdrawal of an extremely severe planters' labour code and the continuation of a moderately increased wage rate.[4]

The most acute class conflict of the post-Emancipation decade took place in 1848. Estate owners once more collaborated to reduce wages, and workers again responded by withholding their labour during the first months of 1848. The decisive factor in the eventual defeat of the Creole African strikers was the presence of alternative labour controlled by the estates. In 1846 a total of 5,975 Portuguese were brought from Madeira – this being the highest annual figure for Portuguese indentured immigration between 1835 and its termination in 1882. Having been resumed in 1845, Indian immigration reached the notable figure of 4,019 in 1846, while 1,097 Africans were also landed. Such work as was done on the estates during the 1848 strike was performed by the new immigrants.[5] The planters had found their supply of 'bound' labourers. The sugar planters were also given permission by the metropolitan power to use the colony's resources to subsidise partially the importation of their 'bound' labour. Within very wide limits, the local legislature was allowed free rein to regulate legal conditions that governed the deployment of labour. This meant that the political hegemony of the planter class guaranteed that the class struggle at the point of production would be conditioned primarily by legal sanctions rather than by the operation of market forces as such.

An indentured labourer was always a recent immigrant, bonded to work on a given plantation for a fixed number of years at a stipulated rate of pay. Consolidation of the immigration ordinances of British Guiana in 1864 confirmed the period as being five years, while allowing for the possibility of voluntary re-indenture for another five years. African immigration into the colony ended in 1864, after having made a notable contribution to labour supplies from the 1840s. Chinese immigration reached its peak in the early 1860s, but ceased in 1866 – apart from sporadic entries subsequently. Portuguese immigration was numerically insignificant between 1865 and 1882, although its social implications were important. West Indian islanders added to the variety of migrants reaching British Guiana, and they constituted a factor to

be reckoned with during the period under discussion. However, the history of indentured labour is dominated by the activity of the total of 228,743 Indians introduced between 1851 and 1917 – the years of uninterrupted annual shipments.[6]

Throughout the 1880s and most of the 1890s, British Guiana continued to be the main destination of contract emigrants from India. Drought, famine and distress in British India provided the context in which emigration agents and recruiters lured members of the rural population to undertake the journey across the 'black water'. The importation level of about 4,900 per annum for the decade 1870-79 was an unusually high one. The average was approximately 3,900 per annum for the years 1860-69, 1880-89, and 1890-99; and it dropped to about 2,500 in the following decade. The last indentures in British Guiana were cancelled on 15 April 1920. Right up until that moment, the plantation labour force comprised three distinct sections: first, indentured labourers who were predominantly Indian; secondly, free estate residents who were usually time-expired immigrants and their Creole descendants; and thirdly, Creole villagers who were mainly African. Each section had its own role, although the proportions were not always the same and important changes were noticeable during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

By 1880, indentured Indians were already outnumbered by unindentured Indians resident on plantations. Immigrants under indenture comprised less than one-sixth of the resident estate population in 1905. Nevertheless, this form of 'bound' labour continued to function as the basis upon which the plantation workforce was constructed. They were the lowest paid group of workers, and newcomers to Guiana were at the lower end of the scale of earnings. This was so because unseasoned immigrants were more likely to miss work from illness, they could not complete tasks as quickly as they would do after some experience, and they were not ready to tackle more robust or more skilled jobs such as cane-cutting and punt-loading.[7] However, it must be clearly understood that there was never any increase in the statutory minimum rate for indentured labourers, neither during the duration of a bond nor over the course of indentureship as an institution. By definition, this category of labour was removed from normal market forces and the figure of 24 cents or 1 shilling per day should be borne constantly in mind as the best to which most indentured workers were allowed to aspire as they laboured to fulfil the routine field tasks of weeding, manuring, forking and the like.

Large numbers of immigrants were imported in 1884 and 1885 out of profits acquired before the effects of the crisis in the sugar industry and fall in prices were strongly felt. This numerous indentured labour force was seldom fully employed in the years between 1886 and 1889. Of course, the workers remained legally tied to their respective estates for

the duration of their bond, but they had to accept cuts in tasks offered and in money earned. In June 1886, and again in March 1887, the governor reviewed the labour situation on the estates, with the aid of assessments submitted by the district immigration agents. The process of cutting back on tasks and reducing employment had been carried to such an extent on Plantation Bel Air that one of the immigration agents declared that it was a puzzle to him to know how some of the immigrants existed, since he judged earnings 'insufficient to support life'.[8]

The muster rolls at Plantation Bel Air showed an alarming proportion of days when the indentured servants were absent from work. Most of these absences were enforced rather than being the choice of the workers. Under normal circumstances, planters gave indentured labourers as much work as possible and paid higher amounts to non-indentured Indians or to Africans only to the extent that this was unavoidable for certain field and factory tasks. The circumstances of international depression paradoxically made free labour cheaper than bound labour in some instances. Low sugar prices and retrenchment on the estates meant that the general wage rate for free agricultural labourers went down by a third between 1884 and 1886 and began to compare unfavourably with the minimum guaranteed to the indentured labourer. Free labour was therefore being substituted for indentured labour. Since the economic crisis of the 1890s hit employers more severely than ever before, it also affected workers more adversely than ever before. By 1896, indentured labourers were earning pittances not only because of production cuts and fewer offers of task work but also because some planters were prepared to ignore the legal minima. Evidence to this effect was disclosed during the enquiry which resulted from rioting and loss of life on the part of the indentured workers of Plantation Non Pareil in October 1896. Gooljar, spokesman for the immigrants, declared: 'Times were very hard ... we cannot live on the wages we are getting; our stomachs are not being filled'.[9] Punt-loaders, cane-cutters and weeders were not being given sufficient work and the task rates (which had already declined by 20 per cent compared with 1894 rates) were slashed at the beginning of October 1896.

Since the plantations were supposed to provide free housing and medical facilities for indentured workers, this represented another mechanism which raised or lowered living standards. The colonial state was seldom as insistent as it might have been to ensure that planters honoured their obligation to provide proper housing and medical facilities for immigrants. An unusually energetic agent-general or an unusually concerned governor tended to expose and partially remedy abuses in this connection; but the two did not necessarily occur at the same time. Complicity between the immigration agent-general and the plantocracy helped frustrate enquiries such as one made by the governor in 1886 requesting a report on deaths that had occurred without the

deceased estate residents having seen a doctor in the course of their illness.[10]

Free social services must be added to the earnings of indentured labourers to arrive at their share of the produce of their own labour. Yet it was the paucity of these services which constantly gave rise to comment. A report by the medical inspector in 1886 linked poor sanitation on the estates with high mortality. The tenement ranges or logies of the inherited 'nigger yard' were unventilated, the water supply was polluted and lavatory facilities nonexistent.[11] Consequently, disease outbreaks tended to assume epidemic proportions. Estates in Essequibo were singled out for unfavourable attention, one of the worst offenders being Plantation Henrietta on the island of Leguan, where residents drank water from a pond dug between the logies in close proximity to faeces scattered on the ground. When such cases came to light, the government made demands for reforms or for compliance with existing regulations. But constant reiteration of the same kind of complaint indicates that the situation was generally poor and that proprietors were not persuaded to invest substantially in services for the improvement of the health of the resident estate labourers, in spite of regulations placed on the statute book since the Des Voeux Commission of 1871.

It cost during the 1890s on average $82 to introduce a fresh immigrant. An indentured Indian whose contract had expired could claim the right of a free return passage at a cost of another $60.[12] The planter had to meet the outlay on social services as well as the hidden expenses of 'seasoning' a fresh immigrant. Against this expenditure, one must reckon the savings in low wages paid to indentured workers and the savings implicit in the lowering of the wage rate for the remaining sections of the labour force.

Estate managers and proprietors sometimes openly avowed that indentured labour was cheapest and best. In October 1886, G.R. Sandbach indicated to his Liverpool home office that labour charges had to be reduced and that the most effective way of doing so was to increase the indentured gang relative to the free Creoles. He explained that 'so long as an estate has a large Coolie gang, Creoles must give way in prices asked or see the work done by indentured labourers – and this is a strong reason why the number of Coolies on estates must not be reduced'.[13] An English visitor to Sandbach Parker's Plantation Diamond in 1891 was made aware of the three categories of labour – indentured, Indian residents unindentured and African villagers – and was informed that the indentured were counted most profitable.[14] Yet planters and their spokesmen were also prepared to affirm that immigrant labour was costly. In such cases, they drew attention to the expenses of recruitment, transportation, housing and hospitals, as well as to the investment occasioned by the seasoning process during the first

year of the immigrant's stay.

What is significant about the paradoxical presentation of low-wage immigrant labour as 'expensive' is the clear admission that indentured labour had as its ultimate function the guaranteeing of planter *control* over the entire labour process, and that this alone justified the continuation of indentureship, irrespective of the cost to the individual proprietor and to the general tax-payer. Of course, planters were determined to use their political power in the legislature to ensure that indentured immigration was not *for them as private capitalists* an uneconomic undertaking. They shielded themselves (with metropolitan help) from the full cost of indentureship. At no time after 1878 did they pay more than two-thirds of the immigration bill; and, at moments of acute distress during the 1890s, the colonial state lightened that load through deferred payments, loans and grants, and also by transferring part of the monetary burden of repatriation on to the immigrants themselves. The planters would have gone further, if they could. In 1899, and again in 1903, India rejected the proposal made by the West Indian colonists that they be relieved of payment of any portion of the return passage.

* * *

Estate production in the Guianas was initiated through the ownership of slaves. The analogy between slavery and indenture has been drawn on numerous occasions. It is one that comes easily, since indenture followed so closely on slavery, and since it can scarcely be denied that hangovers from the slavery epoch were present in the attitudes and practices of the plantation owners. Peter Ruhomon, one of the first Creole Indian historians of indenture, asserts unequivocally that 'no trick of sophistry or twist of logic ... can ever avail to defend the system of semi-slavery paraded under the guise of indentured immigration, under which Indians were brought to the Colony to labour on the sugar plantations, in the interests of a powerful and privileged body of capitalists'.[15] More than anything else, it was the regimented social and industrial control which caused indenture to approximate so closely to slavery.

Indentured labour was accessible to its employer all the year round, which was of paramount importance during the most hectic portion of the agricultural year when the canes had to be cut and (shortly thereafter) when a certain proportion of new canes had to be planted. In any given week of the agricultural cycle, the indentured labourer was potentially available for six days. On any given day, the indentured servant could be dragged forcibly from the logies to present himself or herself when tasks were being assigned for the day. Some fifteen hours of work and travel would usually have elapsed before the return to the

logies, while the comparable expenditure of time during the grinding season was twenty to twenty-two hours. Besides, there was hardly any scope for objecting to the type of task which was distributed and to the rate of pay considered adequate for the particular job. Legal control of the indentured portion of estate labour gave to employers a remarkable advantage in imposing their version of industrial discipline.

William des Voeux had testified that many planters cynically declared that indentured immigrants on their estates must always be actually at work or in hospital or in jail. Many who should have been in hospital were out in the fields. Doctors in charge of estate hospitals were also employees of the estates, and were prone to certify sick indentured labourers as fit for duty – either refusing them entry into hospital or discharging them prematurely. The courts of law provided the final sanction for ensuring that indentured labourers were available every season, every week and every day. An unexplained absence was classed as 'desertion', and, like all other breaches of civil contract on the part of the labourer, absence constituted a criminal offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

In 1891, Surgeon-Major Comins conducted official enquiries into immigration. Although he was strongly in favour of continued indentureship, Comins mentioned that half of the Indians in the Georgetown jail were convicted under the immigration and labour laws.[16] The rate of prosecution and conviction, expressed as a percentage of the indentured population, was on the increase during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and reached a peak toward the end of the period under discussion. When compared with other territories using indentured labour, British Guiana was also the worst offender with regard to the use of the criminal courts to enforce the rights of employers against the labourers.

There were exceptional instances when justice was on the side of the immigrants and when court officials felt obliged to dissociate themselves from the general position taken within the legal system. They then incurred the wrath of the planters for revealing what the reality was like.[17] A petition signed by overseers of the East Bank Demerara estates reached the legislature in November 1881. It asked for the removal of Magistrate Hastings Huggins and a tightening of procedures at Providence Court. Huggins replied that Providence Court already had virtually no function other than to discipline immigrants, and he denounced the planter-inspired petition for requesting greater facilities for the punishment of labourers. This magistrate had given sympathetic hearing to applications brought before him by immigrants against employers with respect to disputed wages, and he had refused to exact exorbitant fines from indentured labourers whom he found guilty of breach of contract.

Magistrate Huggins also criticised the socio-economic system as it

affected women under indenture. He noted that women often earned between 48 cents and 60 cents for a week's hard work. In a judgment in favour of a female plaintiff who sued for wages, Huggins went so far as to justify equality of sexes before the law. 'I know of no principle of law or of equity', he said, 'which would justify me in awarding to a female – forsooth she happens to be a woman – for the *same* amount of work, a *less* amount of wages.'[18] Understandably, this progressive sentiment earned general acceptance neither in colonial Guiana nor in the colonising society of Great Britain. Discrimination against female indentured workers persisted because planters assigned women to the weeding gang and other low-paying jobs and because women were given less when they performed the same field tasks as men. Indeed, one of the backward characteristics of indentured labour was the employment of a significant proportion of low-paid women and juveniles – all constrained to undertake arduous and often undignified tasks in order to try and build the subsistence earnings of the family.

Periods of absence from work (when proved in court) and terms of imprisonment were excluded when calculating the five years of the indenture bond. Apart from serious illness, the indentured immigrant placed his labour power at the unqualified disposal of the employer for every working day of the five-year period. This the law guaranteed. The law also helped to create a situation in which planters could increase the intensity of the exploitation of indentured labour by using their power to define a 'task'. It was common knowledge within the sugar industry that a specific task, such as the forking or banking of a given number of 'openings', would vary in onerousness and time required for completion according to the location of the beds, the state of the access dams and the overall weather conditions.* Experienced managers and overseers were as cognisant of these niceties as the workers themselves, and sometimes they made the appropriate allowances. However, indentured immigrants were vulnerable to coercion from overseers and drivers. Therefore, they often had to accept unfair tasks and a proportionately decreased rate of earning. When a manager authorised a hopelessly unrealistic task (and paid as though it were normative), the immigrant could successfully challenge this before a magistrate only by bringing a manager from another estate to give evidence evaluating the task in his favour. Very rarely did the planting fraternity expose anything other than a common front. Managers could produce overseers, drivers and other dependants to testify; and evidence given by whites was almost invariably accepted as the truth. One immigration agent-general conceded that overseers made it their duty to secure convictions, and he gave his opinion that 'this taking of evidence for granted is the bane of justice, as between class and class'.[19]

*Two cane rows and two intervening banks or clear spaces formed one opening.

* * *

The significance of the legal and industrial control which employers exercised over indentured workers emerges fully when a comparison is drawn between 'bound' labour and the two remaining categories of estate labour. Village labour was furthest removed from legal bondage. The free village movement of the middle years of the nineteenth century gave to the African estate worker a partial independence, deriving from residence outside the plantation 'nigger yards' as well as from alternative subsistence activities. Village labourers could bargain, they could specialise in certain tasks and they could influence the weekly and seasonal deployment of their own labour power on the estate.

The organisational feature that distinguished village labour was the independent task-gang. Independent 'jobbing' gangs emerged during slavery in the West Indies, being hired out by their owners to planters who were short of labour. The independent task-gang under the leadership of one of the worker members was of course a post-Emancipation development. Creole Africans in British Guiana constituted themselves into task-gangs and negotiated with management to have some control over wages, conditions and duration of work.[20] They moved from estate to estate in search of better rates; they haggled over the definition of given tasks; and they sought to use the state of the weather or the necessity of the planters to extract some advantage. Above all, village labour aimed at subordinating the requirements of the estate to the rhythms of village life. Their own garden plots, their minor subsistence endeavours and their estimate of necessary relaxation came before the time and motion of the plantation. Except in dire necessity, villagers never entered into contracts with the estates – preferring simply to reopen bargaining at the beginning of each working week.

Village labour won innumerable small skirmishes in its confrontation with estate capital. Ultimately, however, capital remained in the ascendancy. The presence of indentured labour and the almost endemic crisis of sugar prices were the factors which principally assisted capital in its domination of labour. Most planters aimed at paying villagers 32 cents for a day's task. Although higher than the rate for indentured labourers, this was the payment at the beginning of apprenticeship. It remained in operation well into the present century, being cut with each price fall and being restored or raised only through struggle when labour market conditions allowed.

The elected village councils of the nineteenth century were organs of democratic expression, and they usually came into conflict with the government department or official entrusted with supervision of the villages. In 1879, the inspector of villages portrayed the councillors as being 'a great hindrance to the welfare of the villages', and to substantiate this denunciation, he charged that councillors encouraged

labourers to hold out for wages which were higher than those obtainable on the estates.[21] The inference is clear: planters and African villagers had conflicting appraisals of what constituted a 'decent' living wage – a concept that must be based on minimum objective standards of physiological subsistence but which in the final analysis is socially, culturally and historically determined.

Creole Africans (and eventually all Creoles) spurned the planter-initiated version of the living wage. In this respect, they were in a somewhat stronger position than that proportion of the estate labour force, who were bound like serfs. But the fortunes of the two sections were interdependent, because the overall stagnation of the wage rate for Creoles was closely tied to the fact that indentureship altered the market conditions for free labour in favour of the planters. So long as each estate had its indentured gang, then it was fortified to deal with the independent task-gangs. Theoretically, the choice was between not earning or earning the low wages which indentureship permitted.

This dilemma was tolerably resolved by estate workers or 'peasant labourers', who had a reasonable foothold in the peasant sector and who therefore considered estate wages as a minor supplement. However, African villagers dependent on estate wages took the course of seeking the better-paid jobs, given that there was always a wide variation in payment according to the nature of the tasks in the field and the factory. As was to be expected, remuneration was highest for the performance of skilled tasks. Creole villagers gravitated toward the higher end of the wage scale, mainly because of advantages derived from previously accumulated experience and skill. In 1884, craftsmen such as blacksmiths, boatbuilders, carpenters and coopers were earning $1.33 per day, or roughly four times the pay of a common field labourer.[22] Pan-boilers were the most distinguished of the skilled hands employed by the sugar plantations, and their high earnings during the grinding season reflected their value.

Between 1881 and 1905 and for many years subsequently, the factory remained a preserve of village labour. Field labour was less popular with Creole Africans, because it was less remunerative. The lowest paid estate job has always been weeding – followed by manuring, forking, banking and cleaning trenches. Africans were sparsely represented in these occupations by the second half of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, field labour such as cane-cutting, punt-loading and the digging of trenches could offer as much as three or four times the wages for unskilled field labour; and it was in the fulfilment of these functions that African sugar workers continued to play a strategically decisive role.

The ability of villagers to demand higher prices for their cane-cutting speciality resulted in part from their sense of organisation and their willingness to withhold labour, even though possessing few reserves to

sustain strike action. Reaping gangs usually concluded bargains with management for the cutting of each field. What was of crucial importance to the hiring of cane-cutters was that the canes had to be reaped at a particular time with minimum delay. For most of the year, estates had a sufficient workforce in the persons of indentured labourers, and planters had the upper hand in dispensing jobs and pay to villagers. At crop time, however, cane-cutters were said to have taken advantage of planter necessity. Organised work stoppages were a weekly occurrence, often being timed to coincide with the moment when the supply of cut cane was running short.[23]

Poor conditions of work and wage disputes accounted for the frequent stoppages which punctuated any given grinding season. Conscious of the spectre of slave labour, Africans refused tasks when the conditions were particularly unpleasant. Such tasks constituted 'bad wo'k' in the Creole idiom; and the chances were that villagers would contemptuously tell the overseer to assign such tasks to indentured immigrants – unless management were willing to offer compensatory payments. For example, many decades after Emancipation, the hardships of reaping cane in an unburnt field gained general recognition in the form of extra payment.[24] Only village labour had sufficient bargaining strength to initiate such improvements.

As already indicated, the bargaining strength of village workers was a factor to be reckoned with during grinding seasons. It was necessary to cut, transport and grind the canes within a limited time, and there were associated tasks such as the 'supplying' of tops for replanting. Depending on the weather and other fortuitous circumstances, crop time might also have been made busier by the need to carry on with weeding, trench-cleaning and other routine maintenance work. It was not unusual for Africans to turn up on Monday merely to 'mark' or assess the work to be done. Assuming that they agreed to fulfil the task, they then returned on Wednesday and worked for three days. Delay was sometimes occasioned by the need to check on alternative estates, if they existed in the vicinity. The late start in the week to some extent compelled the planters to compromise over wages and conditions so as to ensure that, once begun, the cutting would be efficiently concluded without further interruption.

Planters held the upper hand during the slack periods in the crop cycle. Indentured and resident gangs got priority for the small amount of work available, while the villagers were lucky if they received two or three days per week. Tasks were then doled out to them, and it was a form of patronage which was tied to their behaviour during the crop season. Besides, even during crop time, planter ascendancy was assured more often than not by Indian indentured labour or by Barbadian contract labour or by the necessities of international depression or by a combination of these factors.

Vital aspects of the impact of Indian indentured labour on African village labour emerged from the detailed evidence collected by the West India Royal Commission of 1897. One of these was the value of the indentured section at key points in the crop cycle. The Commission's interview with one articulate overseer proceeded as follows:

> *Q*: What is your opinion with regard to increasing the supply of coolies when there is in the colony at the present time an excess of labour?
>
> *A*: The supply of labour has no bearing on the sugar industry; the whole origin of immigration hinges on this point. You may have work and plenty of it for a black man and a coloured man, and they will not do it. In planting cane if you leave certain agricultural work over, your crop is ruined. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that you should have bound labour that you can command ... Certain kinds of work on an estate could be left to the unreliable work of the blacks, thus leaving the indentured gangs free to do urgent work. There are certain kinds of work which absolutely must be done at certain times – such as replanting in rainy weather – and for this an indentured gang is absolutely necessary.[25]

The hitch in the above strategy was that the indentured gang could not always be substituted for the independent task-gang, because they specialised in different tasks. Theoretically, it is possible to conceive of large numbers of immigrants covering all aspects of field production. In practice, however, estates avoided extremely large indentured gangs because they constituted a burden during the out-of-crop season. There was always scope for free labour at crop time – and more so since they completed vital tasks quickly. Indentured females mainly comprised the weeding gangs; children took care of the manuring; and the menfolk were chiefly valued for their use of the fork. Fresh immigrants were seldom robust enough for punt-loading and few were adept at cane-cutting, so that substitution in this vital category meant a sacrifice of efficiency. For this reason, planters turned to the import of labour from other West Indian territories and from Barbados in particular.

British Guiana procured labour from the older sugar territories of the British West Indies before slavery ended. The inflow averaged approximately 1,075 persons per annum between 1835 and 1846.[26] A new phase of Barbadian immigration into British Guiana was opened in 1863, and it continued alongside high imports of Indian indentured labour in the 1870s and 1880s. Government assistance to planters requiring Barbadian immigrant workers ceased in 1886, and subsequent entries were infrequent. Even at its peak, Barbadian immigration was outstripped by Indian immigration by four to one; but Barbadians

exercised a great influence on the labour market as direct competitors to Creole Africans. In fact, Barbadians were themselves Creole Africans and seasoned agricultural labourers – fully capable of strenuous physical exertion and of performing the skilled task of cane-cutting. Barbadians stayed for the harvesting season and accepted work schedules, wages and controls that the local villagers were rejecting. The changeover from open-pan muscovado to vacuum pan and centrifugals was most marked during the 1870s and was completed during the 1890s. Factory operations were concluded within a shorter period as a result of technological renovation. September to December became the intense grinding season; and it was at this time that Barbadians were available. The Barbadian presence added to that of the indentured immigrants in reducing planter dependency on the most dynamic and aggressive sector of the estate labour force. The village labourer then had to be satisfied with part-time employment on terms that he could not easily dictate.

International price falls drove planters to the edge of distraction and drove workers into the abyss of desperation. Ultimately, the external environment was the most powerful sanction on the side of capital in keeping village labour under a tight rein. The fall in sugar prices in 1884 meant more wage decreases accompanied by significant retrenchment as acreages under cultivation were reduced. The management on several estates combined wage reductions with an insistence on short-term contracts that bound the village worker for a grinding season of three months. During these months, the estate guaranteed to provide work every day and to offer hospital accommodation if necessary. Creole Africans contracted to make themselves available to work five days each week; they were to accept weeding if no canes were to be cut; they were to complete the day's task within that given day; and they became subject to various penalties for breach of contract.

Employers found it unnecessary and expensive to introduce many additional Barbadian workers after 1885, because the economic pressures were such that Creoles in British Guiana had no option but to make do with lowered wages and tight industrial discipline. The Essequibo staff correspondent of the *Argosy* reported favourably on the impact of contracts on village labourers, observing that 'they commence work now on Monday morning and work till Saturday, instead of wandering from one estate to another for the first few days of each week looking for "price"'.[27] From a worker standpoint, the situation improved somewhat in 1889 and 1890 – mainly because of the availability of alternative employment in goldfields. Immediately, planters raised the cry of high wages and labour shortage. They demanded more indentured immigrants as well as a new scheme for bringing Barbadians on short contracts. A few Barbadians arrived in 1890-92 as part of this scheme; but a recurrence of international crisis

threatened planter profits, and a large part of the burden was immediately transferred on to the shoulders of the working population of estate and village. The greatest threat was retrenchment. Failures and amalgamations led to factory closures and these in turn increased the pressure on the employed sector of the workforce. In November 1895, the view was expressed that fewer indentured Indians were required 'as the blacks and others are getting scared at continued abandonments'.[28] Amid the evidence of real distress on the part of many employers and the fearful finality of estates being abandoned, village workers were deprived of room to manoeuvre. Planters were actually able to advance a theory of 'social contract' between capital and labour – requiring labour willingly to accept wage cuts in the interests of preserving the industry and their jobs. The following notice posted at Non Pareil and signed by the planting attorney of the estate tells a whole story.

*To The Mechanics & Labourers of the Estate*

> Owing to the exceedingly LOW price of SUGAR, the lowest that has ever been known, it is ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE for us to pay the Old Rate of Wages and Carry the Estate on; I am aware that even the Old Rates were a reduced rate, but under the circumstances there is nothing for it but to still further reduce all round. It is a hard thing to ask, but if the Labourers and Mechanics will cheerfully accept the Reduction there is just a hope for the Estate and nothing more. If they refuse we must close up, and that almost at once. Should Prices rise to a paying level I need hardly say that I will give back what has been cut off.
>
> September, 1896 *Harry Garnett*

The above sign was the prelude to lowered wage rates for indentured immigrants to the extent that employers broke the law in not guaranteeing that a standard task would earn immigrants their 24 cents in a working day. It was a sign that meant that the differential between free and bound labour was erased. This applied both to village labour and to unindentured workers still resident on the estate. The unique role of the latter group is one that demands greater attention in studies of Guiana's plantations. As each batch of indentured shipmates received their legal freedom, it was customary for them to test it by 'taking a walk'.[29] In most instances, they shortly returned to the estate on which they had been indentured and entered into a new relationship with management. They continued to reside in the plantation logies or were allowed to build houses on estate land. Housing was accompanied by the privilege of access to free medical facilities; and in return, the free residents usually contracted on a monthly basis to work for the estates.

Ex-indentured resident workers were a mixture of new independence and renewed dependence. Their stay within estate houses – liable to

ejection at a moment's notice – was the cornerstone of their dependence on the estate. Some might move from 'bound yard' to adjacent 'free yards', but they were still within the confines of the old 'nigger yard' where paternalism and quasi-feudalism died hard.[30] On the one hand, they were more familiar with the work routine and with the society than they were five years earlier on arrival. They were therefore able to earn more at the same tasks and to engage in subsistence activities. On the other hand, many tended to become further enmeshed with the estate authorities because the latter granted them a series of favours – giving or renting small agricultural plots, permitting the establishment of retail shops, offering the possibility for grazing cattle or small livestock. The latter was perhaps the most pervasive symbol of the ambiguity of resident labour. The worker who 'ran a cow' could supplement his estate earnings and improve the lot of his family. He also had to take care to remain in the good books of the estate management. In spite of all ambiguities, it can be said that this section of the workforce had progressed. Their legal freedom was at least partially translated into industrial freedom.

Ex-indentured residents were capable of resisting some of the impositions which filled the lives of their bonded kinsmen. When involved in a controversy over a task or over payment, they were said to display a tendency to 'sit down' until some adjustment was made. They also discriminated against certain kinds of work, such as punt-loading, which was physically strenuous and poorly remunerated.

Planters generally preferred indentured labour to free resident labour, for the same reasons that they praised indentured labour as compared with village labour. No estate was ever faced with the experience of its entire indentured labour force becoming free overnight, as in the case of Emancipation; but managers felt great discomfiture whenever the free resident gangs increased disproportionately to the indentured gangs. A crisis of this nature occurred during the 1870s, owing to the abandonment of the device of re-indenture. Protected from being ensnared by another consecutive five-year contract, the immigrant had at least five years of free residence before becoming entitled to repatriation. This was the start of a really significant presence of free ex-indentured resident workers on the estates.

Surgeon-Major Comins emphasised in his report (of 1891) that African village labour would not submit to contracts. He was wrong in so far as he overlooked the period between 1884 and 1888 when village labour was often forced to sign disadvantageous short-term contracts, but the gist of his remarks really applied to the resident non-indentured Indians. The latter were held up as persons willing to sign short-term contracts as a normal procedure. Comins also listed eight different fringe benefits which were part of the package that estates offered to non-indentured immigrants.[31] Commenting on the spread of rice

farming in Berbice, he left no doubt that the object of planters in renting and selling plots of land was to ensure a supply of labour within easy reach.[32] Planters demanded part-time work on their respective estates. They standardised such compromises in the form of written or unwritten contracts, having the protection of the law as landlords and as masters while the non-indentured were of course subject to the inequalities of the same law as tenants and servants.

* * *

Like the movement of Africans away from estate residence, the movement of Indians away from plantation housing in the latter part of the nineteenth century did not necessarily prevent the persons concerned from continuing as estate labour. It did mean that this labour behaved differently from residents – both bonded and free. The development of the non-resident Indian labour force in villages reinforces the generalisations concerning village labour and conclusively cuts across identification according to legal status or race. The device of the independent task-gang quickly became the common property of both African and Indian villagers, when the latter felt the need to bargain with management for better conditions. In his report for the year 1882, the immigration agent-general referred to independent task-gangs among the unindentured Indians. He described members of such groups as 'agricultural nomads' who wandered from one estate to another trying to sell their labour to the best advantage; he chided them for being so simple as not to recognise that it was better to work somewhat longer at a lower rate rather than walking many miles to discover a rate which was a few cents higher; and he concluded that they were grasping after shadows rather than the substance of guaranteed housing and medical attention on the estate.

As soon as a proportion of free immigrants began to reside in villages and to return to the plantations for employment, they were equated with African villagers with regard to their industrial habits. Comins was well briefed on this point; and he saw evidence of the tendency when he visited estates on the West Coast of Demerara. Indians who had gone into the villages were restricting their time on the estates to about three days per week.[33] Because planter propaganda concentrated on the difference between reliable Indian indentured servants and unreliable African villagers, it obscured the fact that common socioeconomic circumstances produced similar responses – irrespective of race. The findings of the Royal Commission of 1897 helped set the record straight. Thereafter, even the internal memoranda of the Colonial Office demonstrated an awareness that no group of non-resident workers would tolerate the rigid industrial discipline to which residents were subjected.

From one region to another and from one estate to another, there were slight variations in the proportions of each category of labour. The bigger and better capitalised estates could afford to requisition more indentured labour, while the proximity of large reservoirs of village labour tended to increase the importance of this element. As a general rule, there was a consistent change in the proportionate make-up of the plantation labour force – with Indian non-indentured resident labour achieving precedence over indentured labour, as well as village labour (African and Indian).

Occasionally, an important estate failed to maintain a balance between indentured, free residents and villagers. It was said that expansion at Plantation Albion on the Corentyne was limited by the insufficiency of indentured servants, but that 'Albion is fortunate in being next to the villages of Fyrish, Gibraltar and Rose Hall – the residents of which are the finest examples of the Creole race to be seen in British Guiana'.[34] However, it was at Plantation Better Hope on the East Coast Demerara that the most unusual circumstances prevailed in the early 1880s. There it was decided that indentured labour should be avoided as a matter of policy. Messrs. Ewing and Company, Better Hope's proprietors, rested their policy on two planks: the substitution of implemental for manual work and the employment of free labour, with preference where possible to the Creole African. In a remarkable departure from typical planter statements, their attorney represented his Scottish principals as follows:

> They recognise duties connected with the possession of land; and so they give employment to the free labourers of different races, all of whom have been introduced to the Colony and can fairly claim, in making a living out of it, to have a share in the labour of the estates; especially do they consider the black creole labourer, as a son of the soil, to be entitled to the offer of such work as he will undertake, and they are not unmindful either that his forefathers were forcibly brought to the country for the gain of the planter of the past and that the planter of today cannot divest himself of *all* the responsibilities incurred by his predecessors.[35]

Since the Ewings (under James Ewing, Lord Provost of Glasgow) had benefited from slavery in Guiana, they may have been expressing a unique but genuine sense of historical responsibility. However, the firm was in effect guilty of breaking the ranks of its own class, and was vigorously attacked by fellow planters. They alleged that the Ewings were no more interested in implemental work than other proprietors, that their use of non-indentured labour at Better Hope amounted to the poaching of labour supplies from planters who paid to introduce fresh immigrants, and that the employment of African villagers was simply because the large village of Plaisance offered ample scope to

recruit cheaply.

Although the approach of the Ewings was challenged in principle, there were a few estates on which indentured labour had in practice given way to free labour. This depended on special circumstances under which the given plantation commanded the market for free labour. For instance, the lower East Bank Demerara was easily accessible to labourers living in Georgetown. Estates such as Houston and Ruimveldt developed an early reputation for hiring time-expired immigrants who had become inhabitants of Georgetown or its immediate environs to the south. By the end of the century, much of the East Bank could exist on this pool of free labour along with the permanent residents and villagers close to the estates. Plantations Bath and Blairmont counted themselves as similarly fortunate, not because of the proximity of an urban concentration of free workers, but because these were the only estates in the whole of West Berbice. Africans and Indians of the West Coast Berbice had little alternative but to trek to Plantations Bath and Blairmont if they wanted money wages.

Immigration officials presented fairly precise data on the absolute and relative numbers of indentured and time-expired immigrants. Large capitalists such as Quintin Hogg had on their estates a ratio of one bonded worker to three or four non-indentured residents in the 1890s. However, difficulties arise in estimating the total plantation workforce and hence the proportion of village labourers. Thoughtful attempts have been made to quantify certain values from the inadequate statistics of the nineteenth century; but estimates of the plantation labour muster still rely on literary sources and approximations.[36] It is clear that the unindentured resident section expanded relative to the villagers, especially during the worst depression years. From 1884 to 1887, the dissociation of Africans from plantation work was accelerated through retrenchment, low wages and the rise of alternative employment in the goldfields. The process was repeated in 1894-6. By this latter date, many villagers were flocking in desperation to Georgetown, even though their prospects of urban employment were slim. Planters generally concurred that it was unthinkable to lower wages beyond the point reached in 1896.[37] One of their reasons for this seemingly benign judgement was that a further deterioration would probably drive the resident unindentured away from the estates and from estate labour, as it had already done for many Creoles.

Indications are that the total plantation workforce was declining in the late 1890s and the early 1900s[38]. Indentured and village labour were the components which were being substantially reduced. The exodus of villagers to the goldfields was a constant talking point among planters. A few continued to use Creole labour intensively for three or four months of the year and therefore lost nothing when the same labourers took to the interior for the remaining months. Indeed, they welcomed this

development since it removed the obligation to employ village labour during the out-of-crop-season. However, there were several small estates which could not grind all of their cane in one short spell, and these complained bitterly of the shortage of village cane-cutters.[39]

In effect, the uneven rate of amalgamation and technological change led to contradictions among the planters themselves, as they sought access to the depleted reservoir of village estate labour. The withdrawal of villagers was most marked in Essequibo and in parts of Berbice – notably on the right bank of the Berbice river and on the Canje. African village labour was slowly losing ground in these latter districts ever since the 1860s, a matter to which the Nonconformist churches constantly drew attention since it so directly affected the persons to whom they ministered. Pastors of the London Missionary Society noted that, once displaced from estate labour, villagers tended to move away from the area or at least to cut all connections with the sugar industry.[40] After several decades of this trend, the Colonial Company found it almost impossible to attract African village labour to its estates at Mara and Friends – even at rates substantially higher than other planters in the colony were paying.[41]

Changes in the composition of the estate workforce meant in part the substitution of one ethnic group for another, but they also gave rise to greater homogeneity in terms of industrial experience. The time-expired immigrants had begun to carry out field tasks previously associated only with emancipated Africans and the first generation of their descendants. Shovel work, for example, was taken up more and more by seasoned indentured workers and by those whose contracts had expired. Even cane-cutting was no longer identified so completely with African Creoles or their Barbadian counterparts by the end of the period under discussion.[42] Besides, in spite of specialised functions, all sections of the estate labouring class shared in most of the fundamental experiences of the era. It is essential to reiterate that (with minor exceptions) payment for labour expended was by task rather than by the day or week. Workers of all categories were subjected to increased rates of exploitation by the simple device of increasing the size of the tasks. Workers had no say in appraising a task. Whether or not a task was successfully completed was a matter left to the discretion of the overseer. If he was not satisfied, he withheld or 'stopped' the pay of the worker in question. Among old workers who had survived one or other of the forms of estate employment, no grievance was expressed as universally or as feelingly as that of the 'stopping' of their expected weekly earnings when they approached the estate pay table.

After 1896, the wage or task rate stabilised at the low level to which it had been driven by international depression. To economise further, planters reduced the amount of work which was offered. The alternative response of mechanised agriculture (with a stable and better-

paid workforce) which was hinted at by the Ewings was never seriously pursued in the colony as a whole. Although factory modernisation continued where possible, technological stagnation characterised the field routines – resting as they did on the basis of cheap indentured and time-expired resident immigrant gangs. In a certain sense, planters were correct in affirming that external supplies of labour guaranteed the survival of the sugar industry in British Guiana during its most difficult years. However, it is also true to say that the availability of subsidised external sources of labour simultaneously guaranteed the persistence of backward hand-husbandry and of heavily supervised work routines associated with the plantation as a unit of production. Above all, immigration rapidly created a labour surplus which made unemployment and underemployment endemic in the late nineteenth century. These were scourges that affected primarily the Creole and free sections of the labouring population, but from which even the indentured working people were not protected.

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MOHSSEN MASSARRAT

Translated by David Fernbach

# Oil, the dollar and nuclear power: the spectre of an energy war*

*The Persian Gulf has now become the main target for the new US interventionist policy in the Third World. The Reagan Administration, egged on by its acolytes in Westminster, is openly talking of the need for the US to station forces in the Gulf, and to prepare the 100,000-strong Rapid Deployment Force for action in the region. This US policy serves three general aims: to use the turmoil in the region as a pretext for stationing new forces along the southern flank of the USSR; to prepare the ground for supporting counter-revolution in Iran and crushing other insurgent movements that may arise in the area, especially in Oman; and to ensure continued western, and particularly US, access to the oil of the region on acceptable terms. At the same time, the conflict between two local states, Iran and Iraq, is weakening the resistance to this re-establishment of imperialist controls. In the article that follows, an Iranian marxist, Mohssen Massarrat, proposes a new general theory of the relationship between the economies of the advanced capitalist countries and imperialist action in the Gulf area. He demonstrates the artificial character of the energy crisis, and shows the political intent behind the emphasis upon Gulf oil. At the same time, he provides an analysis which links the struggles of the peoples of the Gulf against foreign domination to the workers' and ecological movements in the advanced capitalist states.*

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During 1979 the price of oil rose nearly threefold. The struggle for the redistribution of wealth, following the social and national revolutionary transformations in the Third World, was taken a stage further with the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. This struggle could well bear the seeds of a major war. The events in Iran, the conflict with Iraq, the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and the reaction to this by the United States all give a foretaste of a development of this kind. The danger of a war over the Middle East oilfields must therefore be taken quite seriously. An oil war would not resolve any of the crises presently facing the industrialised states – for example, unemployment and ecological problems – still less the problems of the Third World. And yet the illusions of the oppressed classes and the demagogy of the warmongers could generate once again, as so often in history, that readiness for mobilisation that is indispensable to war. It is more necessary than ever, accordingly, to understand the specific driving forces of a war for oil that are now emerging.

**The fuel industry in the industrialised countries**

The known global reserves of fossil fuel stand today at some 12,442 billion tonnes of coal equivalent: 11.9 per cent of these reserves are located in the Third World, 32.4 per cent in the capitalist countries and 55.7 per cent in the 'socialist' countries. Until the beginning of this century, the oil wells of the Third World were scarcely even known. But a worldwide exploration led to the discovery of gigantic deposits, particularly in the Middle and Near East. The British, Dutch and American oil companies were quick to seize these natural riches of the Third World, riches which were to make them into the biggest and most powerful of all capitalist enterprises. Oil production in the Middle East commenced in 1910. Yet it was only after the Second World War that the oil companies came to play a dominant role on the world market.

In the earlier period, western Europe and the US supplied their energy needs from their own sources (coal, oil and natural gas). The US continued this policy right up until the late 1960s. But from the end of the Second World War, the industrialised nations of western Europe began to go over to supplying their energy needs to an ever increasing extent from imported oil. At that time, this shift in energy policy – like the move towards nuclear power today – was justified in terms of an impending 'energy shortage', a contention that was soon proved to be a complete lie. It was not just that the west European states met their energy needs with imported oil, but that they simultaneously cut back sharply on their own production of energy. Between 1940 and 1974 coal production in these countries – Germany (from 1945 West Germany), Belgium, France, Britain and the Netherlands – declined from

548 to 236 million tonnes per year, although these countries still possess sufficient coal reserves to last them for several centuries. West Germany cut down its output of coal from 150 million tonnes in 1957 to 85 million tonnes in 1978. During this period, 131 out of 173 pits were closed, with substantial 'compensation' from the state. 420,000 miners lost their employment, due both to the cutback of production and to rationalisation. The same authorities who talk today of their concern for the jobs of the few thousand workers in the nuclear power industry, were responsible for the loss of several hundred thousand jobs, forcing around one and a half million people to change their place of living and whole way of life. In western Europe as a whole, the numbers involved amounted to about one million jobs and several million individuals. The same policy, similarly detrimental to those affected, has been followed in the US since the early 1970s. Thus, imported crude oil destroyed jobs in the capitalist countries, and displaced domestic sources of energy. In Third World countries, especially in the Middle East, North Africa and South America, the multinational oil companies took good care to ensure a continuous flow of crude oil. From about 74 million tonnes in 1945, production in these countries rose to more than 1.5 billion tonnes by the time of the 'energy crisis' of 1974. This massive pillage of the oil reserves of the Third World means that these now meet approximately 40 per cent of world demand for fossil fuel (out of a total of 9.6 billion tonnes coal equivalent), even though they only contain some 12 per cent of fossil fuel reserves. But what were the precise reasons for such an intense concentration of energy production in the Third World?

**Pillage of the Third World's oil wealth**

In securing long-term oil concessions in the Third World, the multinational oil companies anticipated huge surplus profits. The governments of the capitalist states discovered that massive imports of oil could achieve a double goal. First, they found they could protect their own reserves of fossil fuel (crude oil, coal and natural gas), and secondly, they found they could meet their tax requirements with petroleum duties, irrespective of the fact that this involved the destruction of millions of jobs at home and the plunder of wealth from the oil-rich countries of the Third World. Imported oil, for the capitalist states, meant a source of energy that was, and still remains, significantly cheaper and superior in quality to their domestic sources.

Between 1945 and 1973 the oil companies managed to obtain, in addition to their normal profits, almost $59 billion in surplus profits from the production of crude oil in Third World countries alone. In the same period, the governments of the oil-consuming states managed to siphon off for themselves the dizzying sum of $355 billion in the form

of taxation. As against the $414 billion of oil wealth that flowed to the centres of capital accumulation (made possible by the comparatively low production costs of crude oil in the Third World), the total sum obtained by all the OPEC countries in taxes and rent came to only about $76 billion, representing a mere fraction of the value embodied in crude oil.

Such pillage rests on the neocolonial relations to which the oil-possessing countries have been subjected – prey as they are to the technological superiority and economic and political domination of the capitalist states. As survivors of precapitalist and colonial social structures, the rulers of the oil states were incapable of recognising their real power. Comparing their new-found wealth to the poverty of the past, they treated the revenues from oil like some sort of manna fallen from heaven, with which to enjoy paradise on Earth.

By competing with one another to increase their incomes, they simply paved the way for the oil companies to rob them of their oil reserves in the most reckless fashion. And the oil companies, by their onesided and monopolist fixing of the 'posted price' as the precise basis for the distribution of surplus profits indicated above, kept the incomes of the oil states within due bounds, while the capitalist countries could accelerate their economic growth and welfare on the basis of this imported 'black gold'. Yet these multinational agencies and champions of western civilisation failed to see that they would themselves eventually release those historic forces that would change the existing conditions into their opposite: social revolution.

And in this context, it is worth noting that OPEC, which today seems able to unhinge the imperialist system, neither fell from the skies nor was the mere result of the counsels of an American banker, as Paul E. Erdman tries to make out in *Crash of '79*.[1] It is the outcome of a transformation of the class structure in the majority of oil states, either by social revolution or as the result of a capitalist development introduced by the world market and accelerated by the advent of the multinationals. The founding of OPEC in 1960 had its roots in a process that started with the nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry in 1951, and involved not only the bourgeois social transformation of the Mossadegh era in that country (1951-3) and the anti-colonial liberation in Algeria (1952), but also the decisive overthrow of a whole series of monarchies in the most oil-rich region in the world – Egypt (1952), Iraq (1958), Libya (1969) – reaching its first peak in the sudden price increase of 1973-4 (known as the 'world energy crisis').

**Towards the redistribution of oil wealth**

Given that the greatest possible exploitation of oil reserves requires an unrestrained rate of extraction together with the expropriation of the

major share of oil revenue – and hence a posted price that is constant or even declining – it is inevitable that the interests of the OPEC states (so long as they are ensnared in the colonial relationship) would be to move in the opposite direction of restricting production and increasing the posted price. For the logic of capitalism demands that the producers of a commodity should seek to acquire the maximum value for their produce. Under these conditions the capitalist states will be forced to become more reliant on their own energy resources.

The sharp rise in the posted price, from $2.70 to $9.76 per barrel, and the dramatic increase in the income of the OPEC countries, from $22.7 billion to $95.6 billion, in the space of one year, was the first decisive step in this direction, but not by any means the final one. OPEC now found significant obstacles in its path. Both Iran under the Shah and Saudi Arabia under the Saud clan, for different reasons, did not want to cut back on crude oil production. The Saudi government has always proved the best guarantor of imperialist interests within OPEC. While it never managed to split OPEC, through its 'moderate' and 'reasonable' oil policy, it did manage, time and again, by expanding its own production and thus creating an oil surplus on the world market, to prevent further increases in price. The Shah's regime, by appropriate political pressure, also managed to prevent further tightening of the oil-price screw as sought by the radical wing of OPEC (Libya, Algeria and Iraq). Iran and Saudi Arabia, who in 1978 produced about half of all OPEC's oil, could thus block further radical changes on behalf of the capitalist countries. Until 1978, accordingly, OPEC only increased its price to adjust for the depreciation of the dollar. Even though the 1974 price of $9.76 per barrel rose step by step to $12.70, the revenue from oil actually fell. The nominal increase was more than outweighed by the fall in the dollar, so that in constant terms, annual revenue fell from $95.6 billion to $86 billion, with a slight decline in production. It was the US, in particular, that was responsible for this loss of revenue.

**The dollar trick**

By tying the price of oil to the dollar, the US Administration discovered a trump card with which to undermine OPEC price rises. By appropriate credit and currency measures, the Federal Reserve Bank put additional sums of money into circulation, so as to finance American imports of oil. With these artificially created dollars, passing through the OPEC countries and eventually reaching the world currency market, the depreciation of the dollar, which was already under way from other causes, was additionally accelerated. The result was a steady loss of purchasing power for the OPEC states, while the US managed to buy valuable crude oil for extra printed paper. This

lucrative business suited the US so well that its imports of OPEC oil more than doubled between 1974 and 1977.

In addition, the US government actually started to reward importers with a $5 premium for each barrel of imported oil. This energy policy, which has in essentials been followed quite consistently since the early 1970s, is designed to continue the protection of domestic energy reserves. But the dollar trick has also improved the competitive position of US exporters on the world market. By July 1979, when the second dramatic oil price rise took place, the dollar had fallen by 28 per cent against the German mark (i.e. from DM1 = $2.50 to DM1 = $1.80). Yet this massive fall in the dollar does not seem particularly to disturb the governments of the US's major competitors, Germany and Japan. Before the 'energy crisis' they were up in arms at each extra point that the dollar declined, since it posed a direct threat to jobs in their own countries. But the great advantages that they draw from the fall in the dollar on their oil account have led them to forget this concern over employment in their export sectors. By the end of 1978, for example, West Germany only had to pay around DM25.4 for each barrel of imported oil, as against DM29 in 1974, even though the OPEC price had risen from around $10 to $12.7.

The advantages to the major capitalist countries may differ, yet it was always the OPEC states which found themselves at the losing end of the American economic and energy policies – to the tune of around $8 billion of oil revenue in the four years following the 'energy crisis'. The steady devaluation of the dollar thus served as a lever to counteract the relatively independent oil-price policy now being pursued. But the revolution in Iran has since upset the careful calculations of the capitalist states.

**The Iranian revolution**

The 1953 CIA putsch in Iran proved unable to prevent the revolutionary social transformation that had begun in the Middle East. On the one hand, the historical task that the bourgeois national movement under Mossadegh had sought to accomplish, that is to change the relationship between the oil states and imperialism, was carried through twenty years later, in 1973-4, by OPEC. On the other hand, the Shah, so forcefully placed on the throne in 1953, and allied with everyone in the world save his own people, was finally chased out. With the expulsion of the Shah, the radical wing of OPEC, oriented to the defence of national interests, was decisively strengthened. First, the new Iranian government moved to protect its own oil reserves and put an end to the Shah's wasteful policy by curtailing production. Secondly, its political independence, legitimised by the popular masses, now enabled the Iranian government to join with the majority of OPEC countries in an oil-

price policy that sought to go beyond simply neutralising the fall in the American dollar and bring the OPEC states a step nearer their common goal. The dramatic increase from $12.70 to $18-$23.50 per barrel on 1 July 1979, and the release of controls on 1 January 1980, with the result that the price shot up to a level between $28 and $33, were expressions of a changed balance of forces within the OPEC bloc and on a world scale.

The rise in the oil price after the overthrow of the Shah, resulting in a redistribution of oil revenue to the tune of $100-150 billion per year in favour of the OPEC countries, explains in retrospect how valuable the Shah's regime actually was for the imperialist states, and why they defended this regime so emphatically, doing so much to prevent the long overdue collapse of their 'most faithful ally'. Their concern now is to defend their ultimate and still most important bastion within the OPEC countries, the regime in Saudi Arabia, the last millstone round the OPEC countries' necks.

By its 'selfless' intervention to preserve the *ancien régime* in Iran, what the US really intended was to demonstrate to King Khaled and his clan how seriously it considers the 'loyalty' due to its 'friends'. Yet it is only a question of time until the people of Saudi Arabia cast this regime into the dustbin of history as well, linked as it is not to its own people, but to the West. The overthrow of the Saudi regime, of which the events in Mecca in November 1979, when Muslim insurgents occupied the Holy Shrine, were a first signal, will be an indispensable final link in the chain of that social and national revolutionary transformation of the region which began in 1950. Only then will the OPEC countries really be in a position to re-establish full control over their natural riches and demand a price for their oil that matches its real value. This price would lie somewhere between $30 and $55 a barrel, as this is the level at which it would become possible, given the present level of technology, to exploit profitably the enormous sources of crude oil, shale oil, coal and other fossil fuels that are located in the capitalist countries, and thus to re-establish truly competitive relations on the world energy market.

**The danger of an oil war**

It is precisely this development that the shoring up of the West's remaining political ally – Saudi Arabia – is designed to avoid. Nor will such a policy necessarily stop short at military force. There are many eager strategists of capital who are even ready to occupy the oilfields, and so run the risk of a major war in the Middle East – a war which would have unpredictable consequences – in order to turn back the wheel of history a full circle. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the occupation of the US embassy in Tehran have given these forces a

new impetus. As Franz-Josef Strauss put it in a German television programme on 13 January 1980: 'We cannot allow the Soviet Union to reach out to our oil reserves.' As far back as August 1979 the Christian Democratic spokesperson on 'development policy' in the Bundestag demanded the raising of a military intervention force for the Third World (a new kind of 'development policy'?), according to the *Frankfurter Rundschau*.[2] At their conference on security in mid-January 1980, the Christian Democrats demanded an extension of the geographical limits of NATO. Willi Brandt may well have described the occupation of the oilfields as an 'adventurist idea',[3] but Helmut Schmidt saw a war over oil as in no way adventurist, but actually 'possible'.[4] The French government, according to press reports, has long since progressed beyond the stage of abstract consideration, and moved to expand French military potential to cover the oil routes.[5] This is in addition to the military preparations of the US ever since the early 1970s. Henry Kissinger, as the major American global strategist, put forward the vision of an OPEC 'strangling the West', beginning with the 'energy crisis' of 1973-4, in order to pave the way for a military campaign. But who and what in the West are actually being 'strangled'?

If Kissinger means the OPEC increase in oil prices, then this kind of strangulation prevents neither the oil companies nor the western states from benefiting. Norway and Britain demand for their North Sea oil the maximum OPEC price of more than $30 per barrel. The West German government, too, has increased the duty on oil extracted in northern Germany to 15 per cent of the production price. The Carter Administration sought to tax away the sharply increased 'windfall profit' (essentially identical to the OPEC taxes) made by those companies producing oil in the United States, in order to finance its own $140 billion energy programme (including nuclear energy). This was possible because the world market price for fossil fuels continues to be governed by the production costs of coal, while the production costs of crude oil are in general substantially lower. The laws of capitalist production do not stop at the frontiers of OPEC, where the production costs of crude oil are particularly low, and revenues accordingly high. The law of value does not even spare those states where it has supposedly long since been done away with. Every time the OPEC price is raised, the Soviet Union increases its oil price to Comecon.

Kissinger can have been still less serious about a supposed halt to supply. A cut-back in production, to be sure, but in no case could any OPEC state have an interest in a general cut-off. There has never been any such thing as a crisis of oil supply as such. In none of the major capitalist countries does there even need to be any real crisis of energy resources. Quite apart from the possibility of significant savings, they are able to increase energy production considerably in a short space of

time out of their own reserves. If the US government were to abolish the legal maximum prices for fossil fuels, which stand a long way below world market prices, then it would not need to import a single drop of oil from OPEC. Milton Friedman, the free market economist, was quite correct in demanding the freeing of oil prices in summer 1979, when there was a petrol shortage in north America.[6] This may well have been naive from the standpoint of the overall interest of US capital, but for this very reason Friedman was unintentionally able to expose an energy policy whose goal is to harness permanently public anxiety over a supposed crisis of oil supply to completely other purposes. The EEC countries, including West Germany, also have not the same need to fear a supply crisis as might appear. Within a few years they could increase their coal production to the level of the early 1960s – if they wanted to. Neither the technology nor sufficient resources are lacking. Into the bargain, they would create several times more new jobs than the nuclear power industry ever could. Yet there is no question of this. For the concern of the US and the other capitalist governments is not the high oil prices, nor a supposed 'strangling of the West', but simply and solely to prevent a redistribution of oil revenues worth several hundred billion dollars a year in favour of the producing countries – if necessary by means of an oil war.

**Implications for the anti-nuclear and ecology movements**

The history of energy policy in the capitalist states has great significance for the educational work of the anti-nuclear movement. It exposes the lying propaganda and half-truths which are still served up to the public today, particularly by the nuclear interest. The deliberate destruction of millions of jobs in the European coal mining districts, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, does not prevent the nuclear lobbies of all political colours from falsely pretending that 'the more nuclear power, the more secure are jobs'. What is particularly serious, and even quite shattering, is how the trade unions have been taken in by this 'logic'. The false contention of an 'impending energy gap', used to justify the massive import of oil, in no way prevents politicians of high rank from repeating this with the same lack of responsibility. The policies of capital can evidently only be carried through in an environment marked by anxiety and the feeling of catastrophe. A new danger, however, is the threat of a world war over oil, which has now been introduced into the debate. 'A world war over oil, which cannot be completely ruled out, would certainly be more ravaging to humanity than a possible repetition of Harrisburg on a larger scale. This is a consideration we cannot ignore', wrote Hans-Herbert Gaebel in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*,[7] the day after Helmut Schmidt had pronounced an oil war to be 'possible'. This argument is not only false, both logically and in content, but demagogic and extremely dangerous.

An oil war could not alter in the least the amount of oil reserves in the region of the Persian Gulf, so it would still give no reason to abandon nuclear power, i.e. a form of energy whose necessity and extension is justified precisely on the grounds of restricted reserves of oil. On the other hand, the further expansion of nuclear power would in no way prevent the imperialist states from unleashing a war over oil, in order to win back the ground they have lost in economic and political struggle, and have still to lose in the future, and to redistribute by violent means the annual sum of several hundred billion dollars. Viewed in this way, a war of this kind would actually enable the imperialist states to finance their costly nuclear programme. What some western commentators have seen as a choice of evils, with nuclear power appearing as the lesser, has its true internal logic from the perspective of palpable imperialist interests: *war over oil in order to extend nuclear power*. It is precisely because there is this connection between these two imperialist goals threatening life and nature, goals that are merging into an organic unity, that the new propaganda offensive, which turns the real connections upside down, must be taken most seriously. Only a massive resistance, which the ecological movement in the capitalist states is at present in the best position to mobilise, can break through this logic.

An all-round education as to the precise driving forces of a possible oil war, first of all within the ecology movement itself, is the indispensable precondition, if we are to prevent the movement from splitting over this question before it even begins to mobilise wider sections of the population. For it can in no way be ruled out that the conservative wing of the ecologists might fall prey to the demagogy of a choice of evils, and decide for the greater evil in the distance to avoid the lesser evil at their gate.

Solidarity with the social and national revolutionary movements in the Third World, and with their struggle for self-determination and disposal over their own natural resources, even when these movements are not socialist, is a further necessity, if we are to prevent an oil war striking a blow both at these movements against imperialism and simultaneously at the emancipatory anti-nuclear and ecological movement in the West.

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CEDRIC ROBINSON

# Coming to terms: the Third World and the dialectic of imperialism*

## The masses in history

Let me begin by asking your consideration of an extraordinary declaration, one which I believe will stand us in good stead as we review, as we explore the dynamic development of black peoples in the nineteenth century. I am beginning in this way because I believe the most important issue is conceptualisation: how are we to conceptualise what we were, what we are, what we are becoming? The task is to achieve a means of conceptualising change, specifically the developments among black peoples which constituted their response to the incorporation of their labour and lives into the emerging system of world capitalism in the nineteenth century. For this particular period, the nineteenth century, and because of the structural, material and ideological systems and the organisational imperatives within which the black reaction took form, a specific methodological instruction is warranted; a way of comprehending the movements of slaves in the Caribbean, North America and the Iberian colonies of central and south America, and the resistance movements on the African continent. The declaration is by C.L.R. James, it was written in 1948 or so, and concerns the formation of social forces in general, though it was originally addressed quite

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directly to James' colleagues in the Fourth International. In *Notes on Dialectics* (which I believe is published this year for the first time), James observed:

> Now what is one to say of a political organisation that goes to the people with the proposal to organise a body of professional revolutionaries, in the Leninist manner of 1903?...
>
> What do such 1903 revolutionaries of 1948 propose to organise? A new international or *genuine* revolutionaries?... *There is nothing more to organise.* You can organise workers as workers. You can create a special organisation of revolutionary workers. But once you have those two you have reached an end. Organisation as we have known it is at an end. The task is to abolish organisation. The task today is to call for, to teach, to illustrate, to develop *spontaneity* – the free creative activity of the proletariat. The proletariat will find its method of proletarian organisation.[1]

For many years James was associated with a sense of revolutionary theory and revolutionary organisation which has been identified with spontaneity. Within the understanding of spontaneity there is a basic kind of revolutionary thought which I want to use essentially as a premise for the study of black liberation and its development in the nineteenth century. James, it might be added, was not alone with his spontaneity. The period during which he was writing spawned others. Spontaneity had been looked at, thought about, thought through by other people. Indeed, I want to quote a small section from Wilhelm Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* to give you a sense of spontaneity. Reich wrote – and he was writing in the mid 1940s:

> Usually an important social awareness begins to assume a more or less clear form among the population long before it is expressed and represented in an organised way. Today, 1944, the hatred of politics, a hatred based on concrete facts, has undoubtedly become general. If, now, a group of social scientists has made correct observations and formulations, that is, observations and formulations that clearly reflect the objective social processes, then the 'theory' must of necessity be in agreement with the vital feelings of the masses of people. It is as if two independent processes moved in a convergent direction and came together at *one* point at which the social process and the will of the masses *became one* with sociological knowledge.[2]

That is one of the premises of spontaneity. The basic argument and belief is that organisation and ideas come out not from the leadership but from the masses. Organisation and ideas. Now, this is essentially the position of people like James and Reich, who argued that it is

inappropriate for an elite to emerge with a sense of what organisations are required, what structures are required and then begin to influence or to impose this notion on a following, on a collectivity. It was a sense of human history and human organisation which is extraordinarily opposed to the ways in which we normally think of these things. The dominant paradigms of political organisation, social organisation, social movements presume the extraordinary leader, the extraordinary figure, out of which come organisations, structure, ideology. James and Reich were reversing them.[3] I believe it is important to keep this perception in mind while we review the dialectic of imperialism and the culture of liberation. It is a key to black mass movements formed in communities and societies within which class formation was tenuous if not wholly absent.

**The Negro in western thought**

In the 500 years which have led directly to this moment, the destinies of African peoples have been profoundly affected by the development of economic structures and political institutions among European peoples. Moreover, it has been the nature of these relationships between Africans and Europeans that both western civilisation and the cultures of African peoples have been increasingly contorted and perverted as the years have accumulated. For the West, the appropriation of the means and forces of African reproduction have had unintended and unacceptable significance. The psychic, intellectual and cultural consequences of Europe's intrusion into African history have served to accelerate the formulation of the mechanisms of self-destruction inherent in western civilisation, exacerbating its native racisms, compelling further its imperatives for power and totalitarian force, while subverting the possibilities of the rationalisation of its states, its diverse cultural particularities and its classes. Everywhere one turns or cares to look, the signs of a collapsing world are evident; at the centre, at its extremities, the systems of western power are fragmenting. Thus the British empire at the beginning of the twentieth century, the German empire in the middle years of this century and the American empire today are simultaneously forewarnings, witnesses and the history of this dissolution; and the development of each testified to the characteristic tendency of capitalist societies to amass violence for domination and exploitation and a diminishing return, a dialectic, in its use. 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...'

My subject, however, is not primarily the modern western world and its contortions, so my remarks on the West will tend to remain general and descriptive rather than detailed and analytic. I intend to focus on the nineteenth century, the century of the modern world's adolescence, and on the formation and emergence of African peoples.

Before the African and New World black liberation movements of the post-Second World War era, few western scholars of the African experience had any conception of the existence of an ideologically based or epistemologically coherent historical tradition of black radicalism. The presence of such a tradition, the possibilities and conditions of its existence were literally and configuratively alien to these observers. Given the presumptions these students of Africa and its diaspora made about the bases of the identities, cultures, ethnicities and group formations of these various African peoples, neither space nor time, geography or periodicity, led them to suspect the presence of such a tradition. In its stead, these observers reconstructed social and ideological movements among blacks to conform to the exigencies of specific locales and of immediate social causes. If in their minds such movements sometimes were allowed some resemblance to one another, this followed from the fact of a general racial order shared by most blacks, whether as slaves or ex-slaves, rather than the presence of an historical or political consciousness or a social tradition among blacks. An ideological connective was presumed remote between the African mutineers on the Amistad or the captors of the *Diane*; the Maroon settlements in Pernambuco, Florida, Virginia, Jamaica and the Carolinas; the slave revolutionists of the Revolution in Haiti; the slave insurrectionists of the Caribbean and early nineteenth-century America; the black rebels of the regions of the Great Fish river, the Limpopo and the Zambezi in southern Africa; the black emigrationists of the American ante-bellum period; the untolled wars across the African landscape in the 1900s; and their twentieth-century successors in Africa and the diaspora. These events were seen as geographically and historically bounded acts, episodes connected categorically by the similarity of their sociological elements (e.g. slave or colonial societies) but evidently unrelated in the sense of an emerging social movement inspired by historical experience and a social ideology. Such scholarship, of course, was either inspired or at least influenced by the ideological requirement that modern western thought obliterate the African. As an ideological current, its adherents were not always Europeans. It permeated the intellectual culture and even compromised the work of some of those Africans' descendants.

There is little which is novel in the remark that in the New World and in the colonial clusters in the African continent and the Indian and Atlantic oceans the African became the most enduring of domestic enemies, and consequently the object around which a more specific, particular and exclusive conception of humanity was moulded. As a slave, the African was the embodiment of a moral, political and economic contradiction demanding resolution. Of all the neologisms put into use, the term 'Negro' proved the most enduring. The 'Negro', that is the colour black, was both a negation of African and a unity of

opposition to white. The construct of Negro, unlike the older terms African, Moor or Ethiope, suggested no situatedness in time, that is history, or space, that is ethno- or politico-geography. The Negro had no civilisation, no cultures, no religions, no history, no place and, finally, no humanity which might command consideration. The Negro constituted a marginally human group, a collection of Things of convenience for use and/or eradication. Obviously, no historical political tradition could be associated with such beings. This was the point when the Harvard historian Justin Winsor told a young black scholar a century ago that he, that is Winsor, had never considered the Negro as a 'historical character'; it was also the heart of the matter when Hugh Trevor-Roper announced in 1963: 'Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at the present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness...'[4]

Thus it came about that one of the first responsibilities of the black intelligentsia was to destroy the Negro. This was the precondition for the reassertion of the historical tradition of African peoples – the attack on culture with a specific political significance.

I think one of the most extraordinary statements on this question, and probably one of the most frequently misunderstood, is an essay that Karl Marx wrote in 1843, called 'On the Jewish Question'. Much of what he discovered about western consciousness and the Jew is applicable to the Negro. Marx has been interpreted to say that it was important and necessary for human emancipation that the Jews be destroyed. It is written in some fashion in that essay but I do not believe that is what Marx at any time meant to say. He was involved in the first attack, the attack on culture. The attack on culture assumed the form of an attack on conceptualisations, or an attack on ideas, or an attack on the meanings of things. Marx understood that in early nineteenth-century German society it was not possible for the masses of Germans to understand the Jews. He also presumed it was not necessary for them to understand the Jews. And so he used the term Jew to signify precisely its opposite; he used the term Jew to talk about the non-Jew. And in that process he began to reverse, he began to transform, he began to attack the culture which was associated with, linked to, and a support of the oppression that he as a Jew knew and that non-Jews would have to come to some sense of in Germany. He developed his argument in a fairly simple way:

> Let us consider the real Jew, not the Sabbath Jew, whom Bruno Bauer [the man he was addressing in his essay] considers, but the every day Jew. Let us not seek the secret of the Jew in his religion but let us seek the religion in the real Jew. What is the profane base of Judaism: practical needs, self-interest. What is the worldly cult of the Jew: huckstering. What is his worldly god: money.[5]

Then he writes:

> Judaism has been preserved, not in spite of history, but by history. It is from its own entrails that civil society ceaselessly engenders the Jew. What was, in itself, the basis of the Jewish religion? Practical need, egoism.[6]

There is only one way in which we can begin to understand what he was saying, what he was dealing with. He was confronting that part of the culture – the German culture and Jewish culture – which argued that the Jew was significant because of selection, because of a peculiar culture, because of a peculiar national identity. Marx was denying it. He said, it was not the Jews who had made themselves, but society which required the Jews, which allowed the Jews to maintain themselves. He was arguing that the culture had conceptualised a people and a process in the wrong way, in an absurd way, in an irrational way, ultimately, in a very destructive way. As we can see, Marx was not entirely consistent with his distinction between the religious Jew (the historical Jew) and the western arte-factual Jew (the actual Jew). Still, even his slips did not obscure his intent.

He went on to say, in fact, that Judaism was the ideology of civil society, not of Jews. He was arguing, in fact, that the Jew had become the symbol of the society, a symbol that it could not deal with directly, and so had to project on to some thing, which it then had – in Marx's term – to alienate from itself. The society had developed a symbol for itself, but outside of itself. And it called that symbol the Jew. Marx was saying, it is no longer possible to understand German society unless you recognise it in the Jew, in its Jew.

The first attack is an attack on culture. Marx refused to accept the terms, the language, the conceptualisations of the society which he was addressing. He could not accept them because he understood them to be distortions, very pointed, very clearly related to the oppression of a people. Black scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries eventually came to a similar insight at a similar moment. But remember the premise, I am not necessarily saying that this was Marx's idea: Marx organised the idea. In the same fashion, black intellectuals *organised* their ideas on their radical tradition.

**Black thought and the traditions of the West**

The difference for these ideologues was not one of interpretation but comprehension. The makings of an essentially African response, strewn across the physical and temporal terrain of societies conceived in western civilisation, has been too infrequently distinguished. Only over time has the setting for these events been integrated into the

tradition. The social cauldron of black radicalism is western society. Western society, however, has been its location and its objective condition but not – except in a most perverse fashion – its specific inspiration. Black radicalism is a negation of western civilisation, but not in the direct sense of a simple dialectical negation.

It is certain that the evolving tradition of black radicalism owes its peculiar moment to the historical interdiction of African life by European agents. In this sense, the African experience of the past five centuries is simply one element in the mesh of European history: some of the objective requirements for Europe's industrial development were met by the physical and mental exploitation of Asian, African and native American peoples. This experience, though, was merely the condition for black radicalism – its immediate reason for and object of being – but not the foundation for its nature or character. Black radicalism, consequently, cannot be understood within the particular context of its genesis. It is not a variant of western radicalism whose proponents happen to be black. Rather, it is a specifically African response to an oppression emergent from the immediate determinants of European development in the modern era and framed by orders of human exploitation woven into the interstices of European social life from the inception of western civilisation. Walter Rodney understood this so well when he wrote:

> ...the similarity of African survivals in the New World points not to tribal peculiarities but to the essential oneness of African culture. That culture was the shield which frustrated the efforts of Europeans to dehumanise Africans through servitude. The slave may have appeared in a profit and loss account as an 'item', a 'thing', a piece of 'property', but he faced his new situation as an African, a worker, and a man. At this level of perception, it is quite irrelevant to enquire from which tribe or region a particular African originated.[7]

As we have seen in slave society and post-slave society, such a signification of African culture was accessible for practical and ideological reasons only in a most grotesque form, that is racism.

### African labour as capital

Tracing the genesis of this conception among black intellects requires coming to terms with the development of capitalism as it related to black peoples. Necessarily, this requires a consideration of the African slave trade and slave labour, and the forms of forced labour and contractual labour which followed in both the historical and structural senses in the old and new worlds and on the African continent itself.[8] The scale of the importance of black labour to the formation of

capitalist society can in part be measured in numbers. Philip Curtin has estimated that approximately ten million African workers were transported to the New World between 1451 and 1870.[9] Even more instructive, however, is his observation that 'before the nineteenth century ... for 300 years more Africans than Europeans crossed the Atlantic each year'.[10] Marx, on the other hand, without Curtin's historical advantage, attempted to understand the structural relation of African labour to the development of capitalism. In the mid-nineteenth century, with the process still unfolding, he wrote to Annenkov:

> Direct slavery is as much the pivot of our industrialism today as machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery no cotton; without cotton no modern industry. Slavery has given value to the colonies; the colonies have created world trade; world trade is the necessary condition of large-scale machine industry ... Slavery is therefore an economic category of the highest importance.[11]

And a few years later, in a slightly more agitated voice, he concluded:

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation.[12]

First, African workers were transmuted by the perverted canons of mercantile capitalism into property; then, African labour power as slave labour was integrated into the organic composition of nineteenth-century manufacturing and industrial capitalism, sustaining the emergence of an extra-European world market within which the accumulation of capital was garnered for the further development of industrial production.

In the New World, following the models provided by the Portuguese, the Spanish and the Dutch, the British (and the French) had substantially substituted human capital for commodities. I will follow the British trade since, for a variety of reasons, it is possible to be more precise about its dimensions.

To be sure, the British had begun by exporting those colonised peoples to whom they had immediate access, that is the Irish. In the eighteenth century, for example, perhaps as many as 10,000 men, women and children were 'transported' from Ireland to the New World as so-called convicts.[13] There they joined the numbers of poor Englishmen drawn from a growing reservoir in England of which

Edmund Morgan would comment: 'In the eyes of unpoor Englishmen the poor bore many of the marks of an alien race.'[14] As Richard B. Moore has indicated:

> Somewhat less onerous [than African slavery], but still quite oppressive, was the system of indentured slavery of Europeans, forced in one way or another into the colonies whether on the mainland or in the islands. Writing of this, the Jesuit priest, Joseph J. Williams, relates how Irish peasants were 'hunted down as men hunt down game, and were forcibly put on board ship, and sold to the planters of Barbadoes'.[15]

Nevertheless, the appetite of colonial production for labour increasingly outpaced the supply. Having decimated those aboriginal populations they had encountered in the New World, the English mercantile and planter bourgeoisie found it necessary and expedient to expand their Irish strategy to West Africa. And as they did so, the scale of their enterprise grew beyond anything seen in human history.

In the last twelve years of the seventeenth century, the legal importation of African labourers to British colonies in the Indies and North America reached almost 8,000 per year.[16] The illegal trade during the same period has been estimated to be a quarter of this size. Curtin, whose figures are certainly most conservative, calculates that the total import of African workers between 1690 and 1700 was close to 76,500. Since the loss in transit was about 23 per cent, this meant that in this eleven-year period, more than 99,000 Africans were embarked onto the Atlantic on their way to slave labour. By the end of the eighteenth century and the abolition of the legal British slave trade in 1807, those first 99,000 Africans had been augmented to 2,579,400.[17] Perhaps as many as 400,000 of them, however, never saw the end of the Atlantic in the West. They died 'in transit'. Such was one tragic meter of the profound extent to which the development of the capitalist world system depended on labour it could not produce itself. One other measure, this of the national and racial sympathies of the European merchants of slaves themselves, is that their crews died at even higher rates. An English sailor's song put it simply: 'Beware and take care of the Bight of Benin: for one that comes out, there are forty go in.'[18]

Thirty-eight per cent of the slave labour force transported by English shippers was relocated to Jamaica. In almost equal parts, their origins had been along the routes which fed into the slave ports at the Bight of Biafra, the Gold Coast, Central Africa, the Bight of Benin and Sierra Leone.[19] This ethnic distribution, however, was not the result of consistent or persisting patterns of recruitment. Orlando Patterson concludes, for example, that:

> ... during the earlier half of the period between 1655 and 1700 the largest single group of slaves came from among the Akan and Ga-Andangme peoples of the coastal strip of Ghana ... Forty per cent of the slaves entering the island during the last quarter of the seventeenth century came from Angola ... About 30 per cent of these later arrivals came from among the Ewe speaking people of Dahomey, particularly from among the Fon.
>
> ... between 1700 and 1730 there was a rapid falling off of the number of slaves coming from Angola while the number from the Slave Coast greatly increased to the position of being, quite possibly, the largest single contributor.
>
> ... The slaves from Ghana had also increased proportionately and may well have been the second largest section of the African slaves in the island ...
>
> During the first half or so of the period between 1730 and 1790 there was a rapid falling off of slaves from the Slave Coast and a proportionate increase in those from Ghana and the Niger and Cross deltas. Between them they supplied about 70 per cent of the African slaves entering the island ...
>
> Finally, during the last seventeen years of the trade there was a striking reappearance of slaves from Southwestern Africa, particularly from the region of the Congo. In all, about 40 per cent of all the slaves entering the island during this period came from this area; about 30 per cent from the Niger and Cross deltas; about 20 per cent from the Gold Coast; another 5 per cent from the Windward Coast; and the remainder from the other areas of Africa.[20]

In many ways this Jamaican trade followed the patterns established by the mercantile European predecessors of the English. They, too, had deposited the majority of their African labour in the islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles. The Portuguese with their Brazilian territories had been the exception – an exception which accounted for approximately 38 per cent of the total number of African peoples brought to the New World.[21]

The British merchants sent approximately 20 per cent of their slave cargo in the eighteenth century to the North American colonies. However, this amounted to less than 5 per cent of the total number of Africans brought to the New World by European merchants. Curtin's best estimate is that 399,000 Africans were brought to the English colonies during the entire slave trading period (and another 28,000 came to Louisiana by way of French traders.) This African population, however, differed from that distributed in Jamaica in that at least a quarter of these peoples had been shipped from Angolan ports. Almost as many came from the Bight of Biafra, the Gold Coast and Senegambia, with decreasing numbers from Sierra Leone, the Bight of Benin

and Central Africa.[22] In South Carolina, blacks made up 60 per cent of the colony's population in the eighteenth century. In Virginia, the comparable figure was 40 per cent. They were used on the tobacco and, later, the cotton plantations, but they also worked 'in mines, salt- and rope-works; and they trained as shipwrights, blacksmiths, and as various kinds of woodworkers, including carpenters, coopers, wheelwrights, and sawyers'.[23] Those who were imported from Africa directly were termed 'outlandish', to distinguish them from the 'new Negroes' of the fields and the deracinated, acculturated artisan slaves. These distinctions were practical considerations for the colonists, as Gerald Mullin has demonstrated:

> In sample runs of the South Carolina *Gazette* in the early 1750s and 1771 there was clear evidence of tribal cooperation in advertisements for the return of four 'new Gambia men'; three Angolans, 'all short fellows'; six other Angolans ... and four men from the 'Fullah Country'.[24]

It was from the efforts of men and women such as these that the black settlements of Virginia's piedmont and the maroon peoples of the Caribbean and South America and among the Seminoles of Florida would be formed. Another estimated 55,000 fled to the British forces and loyalist settlements when the colonists pursued the fear of their own enslavement to the point of Revolution.[25] However, enough of the slaves remained in the colonies of North America and the Indies to play a significant role in the development of the English imperial economy. Eric Williams argued:

> The triangular trade ... gave a triple stimulus to British industry. The Negroes were purchased with British manufactures; transported to the plantations, they produced sugar, cotton, indigo, molasses and other tropical products, the processing of which created new industries in England; while the maintenance of the Negroes and their owners on the plantations provided another market for British industry, New England agriculture and the Newfoundland fisheries. By 1750 there was hardly a trading or a manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular or direct colonial trade. The profits obtained provided one of the main streams of that accumulation of capita in England which financed the Industrial Revolution.[26]

This trade, this movement of black workers, did not, however, end with slavery's legal termination. Leopold's Congo, Harry Johnston's Central Africa, Cecil Rhodes' Southern Africa, Lugard's West Africa, Portuguese and French Africa, as well as the New World's slave

descendants, all contributed to the further development of the capitalist world system. As peasants, as tenant farmers, as migrant labourers, as day labourers, domestic servants and wage labourers, their expropriation extended into the present century. Even in the destruction of the means of production, the wars which Marx had stipulated as inevitable, black labour was pressed into service. They were exempt from no aspect of exploitation.

**The imprint of the black historical tradition**

Here, then, are the crude outlines of a trade and system of production which brought to the distant hemisphere a portion of the evolving people who would forge a black radical tradition. In that hemisphere, they began in the sixteenth century.

In Mexico, or New Spain as it was called, the native population is thought by some to have been as high as twenty-five million at the beginning of the sixteenth century. However, it was to become an object of the most intensive exploitation by its Spanish conquerors. Within nine decades, 'diseases, wars, relocations, and the ecological changes wrought by Spanish settlement and control'[27] and, it should be added, slave labour, had reduced the indigenous inhabitants to an estimated 1,075,000. This decimation of the 'Indian' population, coupled with the royal decrees of 1542 (the *Nuevas Leyes*) which 'prohibited the further enslavement of Indians except as punishment for rebellion against Spanish rule', resulted in a significant demand for additional labour towards the end of the sixteenth century.[28] The new source of labour was to be the west coast of Africa. David Davidson surmises: 'It is now fairly certain that in the period 1519-1650 the area received at least 120,000 slaves, or two-thirds of all the Africans imported into the Spanish possessions in America.'[29] The industries of sugar and cloth production, and later of silver mining, were the primary sites to which African labour was assigned. As Indian labour atrophied during the second half of the century, a consequence of natural decline and legal restrictions, it was replaced by African workers.[30] By 1570, Mexico contained over 20,000 Africans; by 1650, their numbers were believed to be closer to 35,000, a supplement to the more than 100,000 Afromestizoes of black-Indian parentage.[31] By the latter period, Davidson states, between 8,000 and 10,000 Africans could be found working on the sugar plantations and cattle ranches in the eastern region around the coastal lowlands between Veracruz and Panuco and the slopes of the Sierra Madre Oriental; another 15,000 were absorbed by the silver mines and ranches of the regions north and west of Mexico City; 3,000-5,000 were bound to similar industries located between Puebla and the Pacific coast; and 20,000-50,000 were employed in urban occupations in Mexico City and the Valley of

Mexico.

At first, resistance among the slaves took the form of flight to native or 'Indian' settlements. The notarial archive, for example, of the Mexican city of Puebla de los Angeles, which is 'virtually complete from 1540 on',[32] is filled with the official reaction to mid-sixteenth-century runaways. Fugitives drew the attention of Hernan Cortes as early as 1523, and the first general uprising is thought to have occurred in 1537.[33] Some of these Africans, however, did not completely sever their contacts with the Spanish. Once freed by their own wits, they returned to plague the Spanish colonists, appropriating food, clothes, arms, tools and even religious artefacts from the colonists' towns, villages and ranch homes and from travellers along the roads connecting the ports and settlements. Once armed, the Spanish would refer to these 'fugitives' as *cimarrones*.[34] (The English would incorporate the term into their own language as 'maroons'.) Soon, however, the fugitive slaves grew numerous enough to begin the formation of their own settlements, communities which came to be known in Mexico as *palenques*.

> By the 1560s fugitive slaves from the mines of the north were terrorising the regions from Guadalajara to Zacatecas, allying with the Indians and raiding ranches. In one case maroons from the mines of Guanajuato joined with unpacified Chichimec Indians in a brutal war with the settlers. The viceroy was informed that they were attacking travellers, burning ranches, and committing similar 'misdeeds'. To the east, slaves from the Pachuca mines took refuge in an inaccessible cave from which they sallied forth periodically to harass the countryside. Negroes from the Atotonilco and Tonavista mines joined them with arms, and created an impregnable *palenque*.[35]

The response of the representatives of the Spanish state was unequivocal. Between 1571 and 1574, royal decrees detailed new systems of control and surveillance, stipulating progressively harsher treatment of fugitives: fifty lashes for four days' absence; 100 lashes and iron fetters for more than eight days' absence; and death for those missing for six months, commuted in some cases to castration.

> Yet neither the code of 1571-1574 nor the issuance of restrictive legislation in the 1570s and 1580s was of any avail. A viceregal order of 1579 revealed that the contagion of revolt nearly covered the entire settled area of the colony outside of Mexico City, in particular the provinces of Veracruz and Pánuco, the area between Oaxaca and Gualtuco on the Pacific coast, and almost the whole of the *Gran Chichimeca*. Only emergency repressive measures and the continued importation of Africans maintained Mexico's slave labour supply.[36]

African resistance in Mexico continued to mature in form and character. The struggle against slavery was being transferred into the battle to preserve the collective identity of African peoples. By the early seventeenth century, according to official colonial documents, at least one black community, San Lorenzo de los Negros, had acquired by war and treaty its right to existence. In the mountains near Mt Orizaba, led by a man called Yanga, whose origins were among the Bran nation of the Senegambia region, the 'Yanguicos' had won formal status as a free black settlement. The mountains, however, seemed to promise much more security to some Yanguicos and other *cimarrones* than the words and treaties of their Spanish oppressors. Throughout New Spain *palenques* continued to multiply and, with a still undetermined frequency, to give occasion for the establishment of officially recognised free communities. Between 1630 and 1635, for example, an agreement was reached with *cimarrones* whose redoubts had been established in the mountains of Totula, Palmilla, Tumbacarretas and Totolinga near Veracruz. The town of San Lorenzo Cerralvo became their free settlement. In 1769, a similar history preceded the establishment of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa, near the southern tip of the modern state of Veracruz.[37] Their existence has come to light through quite recent research into the early colonial history of New Spain. It is always possible that these few villages were the only instance of such occurrences, but not very probable.[38] It is more likely that further research will identify their familiars, traced perhaps through work among the black communities of present-day Mexico.[39] In Colombia, their revolts are detailed in 1530, 1548 and again in the 1550s. In 1552, Venezuela had its first major slave revolt. This rebellion of slaves who had worked in the mines of Buria was defeated in 1555. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, independent black communities with legal standing in the eyes of the state agents had begun to appear.[40]

In Brazil, which dominated the Portuguese slave trade, the maroon settlements (*quilombos*) which began in the sixteenth century would extend into the next. Ernesto Ennes, in no way sympathetic to the fugitives, nevertheless recorded in 1948 from his review of the documents in the Arquivo Histórico Colonial in Lisbon that he found 'traces in every corner of Brazil' of *quilombos*.[41] In the Pernambuco region, the greatest settlement of all, the extraordinary state of Palmares endured from 1605 to 1695.

Palmares (the name stood for the several settlements (*palmars*) which made up a community), though necessarily agrarian, was even more preoccupied with its defence. In 1645, Bartholomeus Lintz, acting as a scout for the expeditions which the Dutch were to mount against Palmares, was the first hostile European to discover that the state consisted of several settlements (two major *palmars* of 5,000

inhabitants, and several small units totalling 6,000). By 1677, there were ten major *palmars*, one of which was the capital (*Macoco*) where the 'king' (*Ganga-Zumba*, from the Zande, signifying consensus ruler) resided, the whole state spanning over sixty leagues.[42] It was then estimated that the population numbered between 15,000 and 20,000, a mixture of creoles and Africans largely drawn from the Angola-Congo regions. For almost a century, neither the Portuguese nor the interloper Dutch, nor the creole *moradores* could destroy it. 'Between 1672-94,' R.K. Kent tells us, 'it withstood on the average one Portuguese expedition every fifteen months.'[43] Palmares did fall eventually, in 1694, the result of campaigns launched by successive Portuguese governors of Pernambuco (João da Cunha Sotto-Mayor, Marques de Montebello, and Melo de Castro). The last expedition sent against it consisted of nearly 3,000 men and was in the field for several months. The final siege started on 10 November 1693 and lasted until early February of the following year. The total cost of the adventure was estimated by Melo de Castro at somewhere near 1,400,000 cruzados.[44]

On the night of 5 February 1694, 'Zumby' (*Ganga-Zumba*), who organised the defence of Palmares, having discovered that his position on Barriga mountain had been nearly encircled, sought a last desperate chance to escape. The result was described by Colonel Domingos Jorge Velho, the leader of the Portuguese forces:

> During the second watch of that night, between the fifth and sixth of February, suddenly and tumultuously [Zumby] with all his people and the equipment which could follow him through that space, made an exit. The sentinels of that post did not perceive them almost until the end. In the rear-guard Zumby himself was leaving, and at that point he was shot twice. As it was dark, and all this was taking place at the edge of the cliff, many – a matter of about two hundred – fell down the cliff. As many others were killed. Of both sexes and all ages, five hundred and nineteen were taken prisoner.[45]

In Pernambuco, again according to Governor Melo de Castro, 'This happy victory was regarded as no less important than the expulsion of the Dutch. It was, accordingly, celebrated by the whole population with displays of lights for six days and many other demonstrations of joy, without any command being given to them...' Characteristically, Ennes attributed this excitement to the 'moral influence which it conferred on the authorities'.[46]

In this same century, the slaves of Jamaica joined the tradition of those in Brazil and Mexico (where important revolts occurred in 1608 and 1670). The mid-century exploded with revolts on that island in 1669, 1672 (twice), 1678, 1682, 1685 and 1690. Barbara Kopytoff has described it most aptly:

> During the era of slavery, communities of maroons, or escaped slaves, sprang up throughout the New World. Wherever there were slave plantations, there was resistance in the form of runaways and slave revolts; and wherever mountains, swamps, or forests permitted the escaped slaves to gather, they formed communities. These ranged in size from Palmares, in Brazil, with over ten thousand people, to the handfuls of runaways who hid on the fringes of plantations in the American South. While most ... were destroyed ... a few could not be reduced or even contained...[47]

And so the litany continued into the eighteenth century: in the Guianas of Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara in the 1730s and 1760s; in Venezuela in the 1730s and 1780s. In North America, the maroon communities of the mid-century in Florida, Virginia and the Carolinas were anticipated by the slave revolt in New York city in 1712 and that of Stono, South Carolina, in 1739. Gerald Mullin found in Virginia newspapers alone advertisements for nearly 1,300 fugitives from slavery between 1730 and 1800.[48]

The eighteenth century ended with a movement of slaves to match the significance of Palmares during the preceding century. In Haiti, slave armies managed the defeat of French, Spanish and English militaries – the most sophisticated armies of the day. James summed up his reconstruction of that revolution of slaves:

> No one could have guessed the power that was born in them when Boukman gave the signal for revolt on that stormy August night in 1791. Rebellion, war, peace, economic organisation, international diplomacy, administration, they had shown their capacity ... The national struggle against Bonaparte in Spain, the burning of Moscow by the Russians that fill the histories of the period, were anticipated and excelled by the blacks and Mulattoes of the island of San Domingo. The records are there. For self-sacrifice and heroism, the men, women and children who drove out the French stand second to no fighters for independence in any place or time. And the reason was simple. They had seen at last that without independence they could not maintain their liberty...[49]

From Haiti, the revolution extended to Louisiana in 1795, Virginia in 1800 and Louisiana again in 1811. Quite recently, Eugene Genovese has remarked:

> Gabriel Prosser in 1800 and Denmark Vesey in 1822 consciously looked to Haiti for inspiration and support, and as late as 1840 slaves in South Carolina were interpreting news from Haiti as a harbinger of their own liberation ... The slaveholders ... understood the

> potential of what they saw. References to the example and inspiration of Haiti reverberated across black America. The impact on David Walker may be readily seen from his great *Appeal* ... And the slaveholders were not amused by celebrations of Haitian independence such as that staged in 1859 by free Negro masons in St. Louis, Missouri – a slave state ... The revolution in Saint-Domingue propelled a revolution in black consciousness throughout the New World.[50]

From Haiti and the 'one great militia', which DuBois and Genovese claim the white South constituted,[51] the revolutionary tradition lit up the horizon of Brazil's Bahia region. From 1807 to 1835, the chroniclers of Bahia recorded revolt after revolt: 1807, 1809, 1813, 1816, 1826, 1827, 1830 and the great series in 1835. Jamaica and the Guianas continued in the tradition, culminating in the Great Revolt in Jamaica in 1831. By 1838, slavery in Jamaica had been officially dismantled. As Mary Reckord has put it: 'The slaves had demonstrated to some at least of those in authority that it could prove more dangerous and expensive to maintain the old system than to abolish it.'[52] Similar moments arrived in the United States in 1863 and Brazil twenty-five years later.[53]

In Africa itself, the same historical tradition was no less apparent in the nineteenth century. But we must also keep in mind the warning issued by George Padmore and C.L.R. James that it was the colonial habit not to maintain a very close record of these events:

> The difficulty ... is to get accounts written in any detail. The British send out their punitive expeditions against revolting tribes and do not necessarily mention them in the annual colonial reports. But if the revolt awakens public interest, a commission will investigate and make a report. This report will frequently clash violently with the accounts of participants, eye-witnesses, correspondents of newspapers, native and European, and persons living in the colony at the time. The French and Belgians, however, publish little of this kind...[54]

The European presence in Africa at the beginning of the century had been largely confined to a few settlements in southern Africa and to trading posts and factors on the northern, western and eastern coasts. Even by the 1850s, James and Padmore assert, 'it is unlikely that more than one tenth of Africa was in European hands'.[55] Nevertheless, the century had opened with resistance. In southern Africa, the Xhosas' Hundred Years War (1779-1880) with the white colonists was already into its third decade. Before its obviously impermanent conclusion, it would take this people as deeply into the historical tradition as any

black people, even the Haitians, had dared. The *Nongquase* or 'cattle-killing' of 1856-7, which resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Xhosas by self-inflicted starvation, continues to evade western comprehension.[56] The Zulu also came to the point of military resistance. From the emergence of the Zulu state in the early decades of the century to the wars of the 1870s and 1880s, the Zulus fought the disruption of the material and spiritual being. Eight thousand Zulu fell in battle in 1879 alone, the same year that the assegais defeated the gun in the terrible encounter at Isandhlwana. As the century progressed, the European intrusion became more marked and resistances more numerous.

In Angola, the Portuguese fought wars of pacification in the 1850s and the 1880s. In what is now Tanzania, the Yao and Hehe in the 1890s confronted the Germans who transgressed the bounds of good manners. Machemba, the Yao general, had written to them in Swahili: 'If it should be friendship that you desire, then I am ready for it, today and always; but to be your subject, that I cannot be.'[57] In the 1870s the Ashanti began their wars with the British; in the 1890s the Mendi of Sierra Leone did the same. And in 1896, as a complement to the achievement of the Haitian slaves 100 years earlier, Menelik II of Ethiopia mounted an army of 100,000 in order to defeat the Italian invader. There were, of course, many others: the Yoruba of West Africa, the Baganda of East Africa, the peoples of the Atlas Mountains in the north, the Shona, Ndebele, Ndlambe and Ngqika of the south. Many of them had to wait a long time for their celebration, many are still waiting.

It was, though, the pattern, the construction, the evolving form which was and is most interesting. The historical integration which the slave trade had accomplished almost instantaneously in the New World was now occurring on the continent. Discrete societies were slowly achieving the social organisation which the attack on colonialism required. This achievement as a structural phenomenon was a concomitant of the world system and the imperialist expansion which it demanded. Its coherence, however, was based on the African identities of its peoples. As a structural process, its dynamics were seated in the very expansion of imperialism. This was the dialectic of imperialism and liberation, the contradiction which compelled the appearance of resistance and revolution out of the condition of oppression – even from its ideology. As Michael Taussig has written, with early colonial Colombia in mind:

> The scanty accounts of Christianisation suggest that conversion and consolidation of belief remained little more than a formality throughout the entire epoch of slavery. Indeed ... the slaveowners regarded Christianised slaves as more rebellious and as poorer workers than those not indoctrinated, and would pay less for them.

> ... Black popular religion could hardly endorse slavery and all it implied, nor could the slaves remain content with equality in God's eyes but not in their own.[58]

**The nature of the black radical tradition**

This brings me finally to the character or, more accurately, to the ideological, philosophical and epistemological natures of the black movement whose dialectical matrix was capitalist slavery and imperialism. What events have been most consistently present in its phenomenology? Which social processes has it persistently reiterated? From which social processes is it demonstrably, that is historically, alienated? How does it relate to the political order? Which ideographic constructs and semantic codes has it most often exhibited? Where have its metaphysical boundaries been most certainly fixed? What are its epistemological systems? These are the questions which we now must address, relieved from paradigmatic and categorical imperatives whose insistence stemmed largely from their uncritical application, the unquestioned presumption that regardless of their historical origins they were universal. Having arrived at an historical moment, at a conjuncture, at an auspicious time where the verities of intellectual and analytical imitation are no longer as significant to the black ideologue as they once were, where the dominant traditions of western thought have once again been revealed to have a casual rather than systemic or organic relationship to the myriad transformations of human development and history, when – and this is the central issue – the most formidable apparatuses of physical domination and control have disintegrated in the face of the most unlikely oppositions (India, Algeria, Vietnam, Guinea-Bissau, Iran, Mozambique), the total configuration of human experience requires other forms.

The first step is relatively easy because it was always there, always indicated, in the histories of the radical tradition. Again and again, in the reports, casual memoirs, official accounts, eye-witness observations and histories of each of the tradition's episodes, from the sixteenth century to the events recounted in last week's or last month's journals, one note has occurred and recurred: the absence of mass violence.[59] Western observers, often candid in their amazement, have repeatedly remarked that in the vast series of encounters between blacks and their oppressors, only some of which have been recounted above, blacks have seldom employed the level of violence which they (the westerners) understood the situation required. When we recall that in the New World of the nineteenth century the sixty or so whites killed in the Nat Turner insurrection was one of the largest totals for that century; when we recall that in the massive uprisings of slaves in 1831 in Jamaica – where 300,000 slaves lived under the domination of 30,000 whites –

only fourteen white casualties were reported; when in revolt after revolt we compare the massive and often indiscriminate reprisals of the civilised master class (the employment of terror) to the scale of violence of the slaves (and presently their descendants), at least one impression is that a very different and shared order of things existed among these brutally violated people. Why did Nat Turner, admittedly a violent man, spare poor whites? Why did Toussaint escort his absent master's family to safety before joining the slave revolution? Why was 'no white person killed in a slave rebellion in colonial Virginia'?[60] Why would Edmund Morgan and Gerald Mullin argue that slave brutality was directly related to acculturation, 'that the more slaves came to resemble the indigent freemen whom they displaced, the more dangerous they became'?[61] In every century it was the same. The people with Chilembwe in 1915 force-marched European women and children to the safety of colonist.settlement. And, in that tradition, in the 1930s James ambivalently found Dessalines wanting for his transgressions of the tradition. Dessalines was a military genius, yes. He was shrewd, cunning, but he was also a man whose hatred had to be kept 'in check'.[62]

There was violence, of course, but in this tradition it most often was turned inwards: the active against the passive, or, as was the case of the Nongquase of 1856, the community against its material aspect. This was not 'savagery' as the gentlemen-soldiers of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European armies arrogantly reported to their beloved publics at home. Neither was it the 'fratricide' of Fanon's extended Freudianism. And only seldom was it the devouring 'revolutionary terror' of the 'international bourgeois democratic revolution' which Genovese's neo-marxism has led him to acknowledge.[63] This violence was not inspired by an external object, it was not understood as a part of an attack on a system, or an engagement with an abstraction of oppressive structures and relations. Rather, it was their Jonestown, our *Nongquase*: the renunciation of actual being for historical being; the preservation of the ontological totality granted by a metaphysical system which had never allowed for property in either the physical, philosophical, temporal, legal, social or psychic senses. For them defeat or victory was an internal affair. Like those in the 1950s who took to the mountains and forests of Kenya to become the Land and Freedom Army, the material or 'objective' power of the enemy was irrelevant to their destinies. His machines which flung metal missiles, his vessels of smoke, gas, fire, disease, all were of lesser relevance than the integral totality of the people themselves. This was what Chilembwe meant when he entreated his people to 'strike a blow and die'. This is what all the Jakobos in all the thousands of Chishawashas and at all the tens of thousands of beer-parties which dot the black world have been saying for tens of generations: 'We had only ourselves to blame for defeat.'[64] This was a revolutionary consciousness which proceeded

from the whole historical experience of black people and not merely from the social formations of capitalist slavery or the relations of production of colonialism.

Cabral, I believe, has made this point in the obverse when he asserted that 'it is generally within the culture that we find the seed of opposition, which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement'.[65] If he, and Morgan, and Mullin and Genovese (by sheer accident I assure you) are correct, then it is quite possible that massive black violence is largely an artefact of westernisation. I suspect that it would appear among those blacks most deeply implicated in the institutions and cultures of the West. Our soldier/presidents-for-life who mark the national landscapes of modern Africa would seem to confirm this. Our black intellectuals in power seem frequently to be just as pathological. At Oxford, at Harvard, at the Sorbonne and their satellites, they have ingested sets of rules with cataclysmic consequences. They knife though our lives making the choices of madmen and specialists.

In one sense, of course, they are the heirs of the nineteenth century. Still, their inheritance is the unnatural one. There is a more natural legacy in that century, one of which I hope I have given you some indication.

## References


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3 Of course, despite the dissimilarities in their backgrounds, both James and Reich were raising political objections to an international Communist movement dominated by Stalin's authorisation of 'Marxist-Leninist' (Bolshevik) centralisation. In the early 1930s, James had opted for Trotsky over a Stalin resolute in the pursuit of 'socialism in one country', the destruction of the revolutionary Bolshevik party and the abandonment of national liberation movements in the colonies of the 'bourgeois-democracies' of Britain, France and Belgium. Reich, from his direct experience of workers' consciousness in the clinics he helped to organise in Vienna and Berlin in the late 1920s, expelled from the German Communist Party (and the International Psychoanalysis Association) in the early 1930s for his public criticisms of the Party's defaulting to the Nazi movement, was in his first stage of disaffection: the pursuit of 'sexual politics'. See C.L.R. James, 'Laski, St. Paul and Stalin', in *The Future in the Present* (Westport, 1977); Wilhelm Reich, 'What is class consciousness', in *Sex-Pol* (New York, 1972).
4 Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The rise of Christian Europe I', in *The Listener* (28 November 1963), p. 871.
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6 Ibid., p.50.
7 Walter Rodney, 'Upper Guinea and the significance of the origins of Africans *enslaved in the New World', Journal of Negro History* (Vol. LIV, no. 4, October 1969), p.345.
8 These are, obviously, pre-eminently economic indices and it is the convention of this

particular tradition of inquiry to employ them as such, strictly, to divulge the nature of the relationship between blacks (labour) and capitalism (mode of production). Here, however, the intention is not a reductionist one but an attempt to demonstrate in the simplest terms.

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12 Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I (New York, 1977), p.751.
13 Abbot Smith, *Colonists in Bondage* (Williamsburg, 1947), p.134.
14 Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York, 1975), pp.325-6.
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17 Ibid., pp.151-4.
18 Ibid., p.282.
19 Ibid., pp.139-40.
20 Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (Kingston, 1969), pp.142-4.
21 Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, op. cit., pp.91-2.
22 Ibid.
23 Gerald Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion* (New York, 1972), p.7.
24 Ibid., p.43.
25 F. Nwabueze Okoye, 'Chattel slavery as the nightmare of the American revolutionaries', *William and Mary Quarterly* (Vol. XXXVII, no.1, January 1980), pp.3-5; C.L.R. James, 'The Atlantic slave trade,' in *The Future in the Present* (Westport, 1977), p.246; Jeffrey Crow, 'Slave rebelliousness and social conflict in North Carolina 1775-1802', *William and Mary Quarterly* (Vol. XXXVII, no.1, January 1980), p.89.
26 Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York, 1966), p.52.
27 David Davidson, 'Negro slave control and resistance in colonial Mexico, 1519-1650', *Hispanic American Historical Review* (Vol. XLVI, no.3, August 1966), p.236.
28 Peter Boyd-Bowman, 'Negro slaves in early colonial Mexico', *The Americas* (Vol. XXVI, no.2, October 1969), p.136.
29 Davidson, op. cit., p.236.
30 Antonio Vazquez de Espinosa, author of *Compendium and Description of the West Indies* (Washington DC, 1942), recounts some of the measures used by Spanish colonists to delay the loss of Indian labour to their enterprises: '...although the Royal Council of the Indies ... has tried to remedy this evil with warrants and the amelioration of this great hardship and enslavement of the Indians, and the Viceroy of New Spain appoints mill inspectors ... since most of those who set out on such commissions, aim rather at their own enrichment ... and since the mill owners pay them well, they leave the wretched Indians in the same slavery ... the mill owners keep places provided in the mills in which they hide the wretched Indians against their will, so that they do not see or find them, and the poor fellows cannot complain about their wrongs.' (p.134)
31 Davidson, op. cit., p.237.
32 Boyd-Bowman, op. cit., p.134.
33 Leslie Rout Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), p.105; Davidson, op. cit., pp.242-3.
34 Rout, op. cit., p.101.
35 Davidson, op. cit., p.244.

36 Ibid., pp.245-6.
37 William Taylor, 'The foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa', *The Americas* (Vol. XXVI, no.4, April 1970), pp.441-6.
38 As an indication of how fleeting is certainty, Davidson in 1966 was willing to argue that San Lorenzo de los Negros had been the only such settlement: 'Yanga's maroon movement is a notable incident in the history of Negroes in Mexico — the only known example of a fully successful attempt by slaves to secure their freedom en masse by revolt and negotiation and to have it sanctioned and guaranteed in law.' (Davidson, op. cit., p.259) Only four years later, Taylor (op. cit.) had published his discovery of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa. And Vazquez de Espinosa, writing contemporaneously to the foundation of San Lorenzo, described a 'village of free Negro and mulattoes' in the nearby district of Guatemala (op. cit., p.224).
39 Rout, op. cit., pp.278-82.
40 Ibid., pp.109, 111; Aquiles Escalante, *'Palenques* in Colombia', in Richard Price (ed.), *Maroon Societies* (Garden City, 1973), pp.76-7; Miguel Acosta Saignes, 'Life in a Venezuelan *Cumbe*', in Richard Price,op. cit., pp.64-73.
41 Ernesto Ennes, 'The Palmares "republic" of Pernambuco: its final destruction, 1697', *The Americas* (Vol. V, no.2, October 1948), p.201.
42 R.K. Kent, 'Palmares: an African state in Brazil', *Journal of African History* (Vol.VI, no.2, 1965), pp.166-8.
43 Ibid., p.162.
44 Ennes, op. cit., p.213.
45 Ibid., pp.209-10.
46 Ibid., p.211. Some measures of the morality to which Ennes refers with approval are the sentiments expressed by Colonel Domingos Jorge Velho while justifying his impressment of Indian natives into his army: '...we augment our troops, and with them we carry war to those obstinate ones who refuse to give up; and if afterwards we avail ourselves of them for our plowing, we do them no injustice, because it is that we may sustain them and also their children no less than ourselves and ours; and so far is this from enslaving them that it rather does them an inestimable favour in that it teaches them to plow, plant, reap and labour for their own support — a thing which, before the whites teach it to them, they do not know how to do.' (p.207)
47 Barbara Kopytoff, 'The early political development of Jamaican maroon societies', *William and Mary Quarterly* (Vol. XXXV, no.2, April 1978), p.187.
48 Mullin, op. cit., pp.89-103.
49 C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York, 1963), pp.356-7.
50 Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution* (Baton Rouge, 1979), pp.95-6.
51 W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York, 1962), p.12.
52 Mary Reckord, 'The Jamaican slave rebellion of 1831', *Past and Present* (No. 40, July 1968), p.125.
53 W.E.B. DuBois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (New York, 1954).
54 C.L.R. James, and George Padmore, 'Revolts in Africa', in *The Future in the Present* (Westport, 1977), p.79.
55 Ibid., p.70.
56 Bonnie Keller, 'Millenarianism and resistance: the Xhosa cattle-killing', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (Vol. XIII, nos. 1-2, January/April 1978).
57 Basil Davidson, *The African Past* (London, 1964), pp.357-8.
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62 James, *The Black Jacobins*, op. cit., p.256.

63 Genovese, op. cit., pp.9-11.
64 Terence Ranger, 'The people in African resistance', in *Journal of Southern African Studies* (Vol.4, no.1, October 1977), p.126.
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CHRIS SEARLE

# Message to Grenada: an interview with Edward Brathwaite

*Chris Searle*: Edward Brathwaite, how do you think British colonialism used the English language to strengthen and consolidate its grip on the colonised people of the Caribbean?

*Edward Brathwaite*: The first thing to consider is that the Caribbean was created by British and European colonialism generally, in a situation where language was first of all a vacuum.

In other words, the original language of the Amerindians was destroyed with the death of the Amerindians within thirty years of 1492, and then labour was imported mainly from Africa. The arrangement there was that Africans were not permitted to speak their own languages publicly. So that the *lingua franca* and the officially public languages had to be European languages. In the British colonies English became the language of education, the language of conversation and social affairs. So that everyone had to speak this language, which was the language of the master. In that way, norms, fashions and models were created in terms of English speech.

That was the old syndrome of Prospero versus Caliban, and I say

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this because although English was the official and public language, we have to remember that the African languages and their creole forms remained underground and submerged, but still present in the society. So that when we think of language in the Caribbean in a colonial situation, we have also to realise that although the elite spoke English and English was a model from the metropole, the people, the slaves and labourers still continued to speak their own version either of English or of an African language. So that the revolt possibilities were always there in the submerged language.

*CS*: How did the English language betray the colonised man or woman who spoke it?

*EB*: It betrayed them by making the people think in terms that had no relationship to their environment. For example, the history that went with the English language was the history of English events, English queens, European affairs, with a complete absence of an alternative, of African, Asian or Amerindian sources. The idea of beauty was enshrined in the notions of European beauty and the images which were presented and embedded in the brains of the people who spoke the language were the images of the English poets – like the daffodil.

*CS*: What contradictions were there in the English language which inspired resistance in those people of the Caribbean who learned and used it?

*EB*: I don't know whether you would call this a contradiction, but every language has an outer and inner core. English has the official side but it also has the language of rebellion embedded in it – after all, there are English rebels too.

In the case of the Caribbean, starting with slavery, the English language which transmitted itself in terms of rebellion would have been the language of the Bible. This is where the missionaries were important, because when the slaves began to be taught Christianity, they interpreted it as primitive Christianity, the liberation of themselves from slavery, from Babylon. That is how they began to acquire an English language of rebellion; but I pause there because although they were acquiring this vocabulary we have to remember they also had their own vocabulary all along. It is not, as some people say, that it was only when they became Christianised or became Europeanised that they began to conceive of rebellion. Any man in captivity has a natural rebellious reaction and the slaves had it in good measure.

In the history of the maroons, for instance, which we really don't know enough about, there is very clear evidence of this. There they used their models which had been brought over from Ashanti and Yoruba, and they adapted them to the conditions of the terrain that they had captured. Then they converted this to very clear liberation

and freedom-fighting movements. The people of the plantation didn't have that advantage. Their original culture had been more eroded by their European masters, and this is where they found the ideology which was coming in from radical European languages very useful.

*CS*: Is it necessary to decolonise language itself? If so, how does a newly-liberated English-speaking nation set about decolonising the English language, along with every other institution tainted by the complexes of colonialism?

*EB*: We were all taught that English had a certain way of *sounding* – BBC English, Oxford English, etc., etc. – and any other form, which included our own, was not acceptable.

Decolonisation would mean that we would have the freedom to use the full range of English, that is not only provincial English and vernacular Englishes, but also our own forms of English. This means that what people call *dialect* – and this is where you come to the crux in the schools – must be given the opportunity to find itself within the educational framework and within the creative framework.

For example, English poetry is dominated, from Chaucer onwards, by the iambic pentameter. That created a marching syndrome within the mind which is transmitted into certain kinds of images and a certain structure of apprehension. Whereas in the Caribbean, the hurricane cannot be expressed in terms of iambic pentameters. If you try to express a hurricane using 'te-tum, te-tum, te-tum, te-tum, te-tum', there is no way in which you can capture it. In the same way that 'te-tum, te-tum, te-tum, te-tum' will also recall Gray's *Elegy*, 'To be or not to be' and that kind of apprehension that is really not a part of the essential Caribbean experience. I would say that the essential Caribbean experience is expressed more in terms of what you call *calypso*, rather than iambic pentameter.

So that by allowing and encouraging a free choice of models, we would be decolonising English. In other words you would be using English in a fuller sense than the English that is accepted by the British establishment and the colonial establishment.

*CS*: Does that also mean, that within the process of decolonising language, that the student, whether he or she was from the Caribbean or the British working class, that he or she should have at his or her disposal the entire length, depth and breadth of the English language so as to be as eloquent in its usage as possible?

*EB*: Absolutely, absolutely! The full spectrum must be employed. You can choose within the spectrum, and I think that many of our younger poets are now choosing to write in what I call *nation language* rather than dialect, mainly because they are redressing a balance, and they need to catch up with what was neglected.

Every artist and every conscious person in a developing society must have the full range of *all* resources, not only language resources but economic, political, ideational – the whole lot. Therefore no one should ever attempt to restrict people's language, either to Shakespeare and Milton on the one hand, or to Malik and Sparrow on the other.

*CS*: In the context of a country which for centuries was dragged into underdevelopment by colonialism, isn't there also a need, along with the *nation language* to which you referred, for the students to acquire a language capable of accommodating concepts and scientific analysis and planning for that country's material development? Is there any problem with reconciling the encouragement of *dialect*, an aspect of language which is specifically local, with a form of language which encourages thinking in concepts, a language far more scientific and universal?

*EB*: I don't accept that there is a division. The *nation language* will absorb the language of science and ideas just as easily as English or any of the European languages – which themselves are really vernaculars too. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is in fact written in a vernacular of Latin which becomes the Italian *nation language*, and it absorbs all the ideas that are available. I think that if you begin to listen to calypso or folk tales, or listen to people talking about dreams or their ideas in a very informal context, then you discover that they are absorbing and using complex ideas but are translating them into the language of their own environment. It is a mystique to believe that so-called 'science', whatever that is, has a special language. All languages are capable of dealing with their own environment, which is really what science is about.

*CS*: Could I quote some lines from your own poetry?

> I
> must be given words
> to refashion futures....
> like a healer's hand....

In what context could these words be true of the English language? And how closely is the emancipation of language itself connected with the economic and political emancipation of a new Caribbean nation?

*EB*: It's a very good question, and I appreciate you putting it that way because many people who were involved in liberation struggles – certainly in my experience in the Caribbean – have played down the role of language and culture. In fact, in a sense the artist is a seer, or a harbinger of what is happening. Most artists I know have perceived and anticipated a lot of the developments which have taken place in the Caribbean, and the tragedy is that when the developments *have* taken place, then the people who have carried them out have tended to neglect or

downplay what those very artists had done, say ten years before.

In the beginning was the *word*, and until you can conceive of change, then that change will not come about. By calling upon change – what the Africans call *nommo* in the Kongo language – by creating the concept of change, the concept of rebellion, the concept of freedom, you can in fact encourage its encompassment.

*CS*: For many Caribbean and English people, the English language is the only language we've got. How do we set about transforming it to serve our common revolutionary ends?

*EB*: We set about it by, as I said, allowing its full resources to come to the surface. The tragedy of colonial peoples is that they have got a lot of rich resources which are under the earth, underground, submerged, and so because of that and without the use of that submerged ore, that submerged resource, they have only got a very limited ability to perform.

They know very well that they have this underground resource, but they have not got the encouragement and the confidence to be using it. Now, a liberation struggle, by changing the structures of the environment, that is to say by changing the structure of people's relationships with each other and changing the relationship of people to authority, creates the opportunity for a great deal of the underground power to come forth. Now when that power comes forth we have the responsibility of recognising and using it. Very often we become afraid of it, and after the first explosion we try to control it and re-submerge it. I think the tragedy of a lot of liberation movements is that after the first hundred days, things have gone back to being as conservative as ever.

So the responsibility of a revolutionary movement, of a liberation movement, is first of all to recognise the underground resources, and then to use those same resources as a part of a more general and universal liberation movement. This means that you've got to have some knowledge of what you possess, *you've got to have an inventory*. You've got to have people who are aware, in the case of Grenada, of the resources of Grenadian languages and culture. So that when it does become visible and approachable, then there would not be all that colonial fear of the unknown, but the ability to say, 'Yes, this is ours, welcome! You've come now, let us use you for the future.' That is why I used that expression 'refashion futures like a healer's hand', for revolution is in fact an act of healing.

*CS*: How is it that English, as used by what seems to be the majority of established English poets, is so moribund, so less energetic, dynamic and so less full of flashes of insight, in comparison with the English used by decolonised peoples or peoples *still* struggling against colonialism or neocolonialism? How is it that the poets and writers of the colonised peoples – like yourself, Lamming or Kwesi Johnson – are

showing English people themselves how to use English? How is it that they have shown us the hidden resources and struck a spark within what is our own common and shared language?

*EB*: And why is it that the English establishment hasn't paid attention to that question? The English, and Europe generally, had their great kinetic period in the seventeenth century, in the time of Shakespeare and the metaphysicals. I think this was the time when the underground resources of English and Europe generally were being used. The energy there spilled over into the Atlantic and all over the world, became the Renaissance, the period of exploration and eventually the period, unfortunately, of imperialism.

And it was that imperialism that began to sully that excitement. The responsibility of 'the white man's burden' began to corrupt the very resources of European energy, so that English and European culture generally became a *veneer* culture rather than the living culture of the people. It became the cultural expression of the elite. The organisations that were established in those arid societies – the *Oxford Dictionary, The Times* newspaper, the BBC – all of these monoliths were set up in order to protect the empire and to create a model for what was correct or not.

The submerged people, on the other hand, had all this volcanic energy, this energy of the hurricane with them and an oral tradition and a tradition of communal participation. They had to express themselves completely, not *just* through the written word or established institutions and computers. They had to express themselves in a way which would communicate with other *people*, not communicate through artifice. In that way they had to use their bodies as part of their expression, and that body language and energy transforms itself and translates itself into the written word as well, into the poetry and novels and various forms of theatrical art, calypso and other forms of cultural expression. The music too in the developing world, like the literature, is full of that same energy, because the people themselves are in much closer contact with underground resources than the people of Europe, who have exchanged the earth for the machine.

*CS*: You come from Barbados, a small island which has produced great cultural richness, often using as its organ the English language. Why do you think that this cultural strength has not been reconciled with economic and political emancipation and a rupture with imperialism, as has happened in Grenada?

*EB*: Grenada has already emulated Barbadian culture by its own revolution, something Barbados has not yet got around to doing.

What is important about Barbados, and it's not only the Lammings – you have to think of the *Three W's* in cricket, Sobers and all the others – is that Barbados is not really small. It's as large as the ocean is

large. The landscape is really a seascape in Barbados, the horizons are not limited to the earth, but to the wider sphere that is the ocean. So that Barbadians seem to have a much wider cosmos than one would imagine from a place only twenty-one miles long. The other factor is that because there are 250,000 people in such a small area of 166 square miles, there is a high sense of competition. So you tend to have this compression of energy and talent, which eventually spills out into someone like Lamming or Sobers.

Grenada, as a mountainous island, although it may be larger in terms of surface area, its mountainous areas tend to have valleys which throw people into themselves rather than out of themselves. I think you'll find that the artistic expression in Grenada tends to be much more imploded, more looking inwards rather than outwards. So that Grenada has not yet really produced figures such as Frank Worrell or that kind of person. But what Grenada has as an advantage, in relation to growing up in the twenty-first century, is a tradition more in connection with Jamaica than Barbados – the tradition of *Maroonage*, the Maroons. These mountains and this inward-lookingness at the same time nurture self-reliance and an alternative to imperial and metropolitan cultures, which is a very rare commodity in my view.

For a long time people have neglected the Maroon aspect of their heritage, but if you look at the history of Grenada and the books written about it you would probably find very little reference to *Maroonage*. I don't think people know the history of these resistance fighters of the eighteenth century as well as they ought to, just as in Jamaica, Nanny of the Maroons was hardly known until a few years ago when she was made a national hero. But that too is in the history of Grenada. I am thinking of Fédon, for example, and in the same way as I said that people need to recognise the resources of their language, so that when it is liberated they can use its fullness, so in Grenada one needs to understand more about the original history of that island so connections can be made between that very real achievement of the past with the very real achievement of the present.

In Barbados, that peculiar landscape which is really a seascape, and the tension in the population, the compactness of the people and living space there, all have worked to the advantage not only of individuals of talent, but also greatly to the advantage of the *plantation* and the plantation society *par excellence*. There is really a competition between the individual talent and the plantation. In most cases the plantation, being the structure, would win. In fact, the Barbadian person of talent doesn't really become a recognised person of talent until he leaves the plantation. Very few Barbadians of talent have operated within the Barbadian community, unfortunately. The cricketers have mainly made their names abroad and have been recognised on the international stage to a large degree before being recognised in Barbados.

Even the writers, with the exception perhaps of Lionel Hutchinson and some of the younger writers of the Writers' Workshop, have not really worked significantly in Barbados during their working lives.

In the case of Grenada it's the other way round. The very nature of the environment there has meant that you have a greater storing up of talent within Grenada, so that when the revolution rose up, *because* of this storing up of talent, it led almost inevitably to its apotheosis in the revolution. In other words the talent that led to Grenada's revolution became an atomic pool within Grenada because of the Maroon nature of the society. Whereas the talents that would lead to a revolution in Barbados have been exported, so that so far Barbados hasn't had that kind of opportunity.

*CS*: Have you any message you would like to give to the youth of Grenada, particularly those intending to be teachers?

*EB*: The message would be that I hope I would be able to visit Grenada as soon as possible to see for myself, because messages are difficult to give from a distance. I have a very strong feeling of solidarity with the people of Grenada, and I have great hopes for the teaching profession, which is in the vanguard of any real change that should take place.

I would say that I hope that the teachers would be aware of their very important role in the development of their situation and that their responsibility is twofold. In the first place, they have to explain to their students what *Grenada* means, what *Grenada* is about – not only what the revolution is about but what the total environment is about – so that the young people will be given a sense of *themselves*. But the teachers themselves will not be able to do that unless they as teachers, and as people and as Grenadians, have a sense of *themselves*. In other words, they would have to do some important research into their own history. And when I say history, I don't only mean that kind of history in the history book. They really ought to begin to understand how their own local communities became how they are, and how the institutions that they are a part of developed. And above all – and this is a very important proceeding that very few people have undertaken – to begin to understand the history of their own families. They need to have a sense of that very important aspect of our communities. I think we tend, because of slavery, to be a bit ashamed of family, and we let the sociologists talk about the West Indian families being disorganised and suffering from disnomia. I would say that any territory that is capable of having a revolution like that of Grenada must have had a very remarkable social infrastructure to be able to support it. This means there must be some kind of internal solidarity that requires investigation. Not investigation in an arid, scientific, and sociological sense, but investigation into the total sense of recognising what is our own.

London *30 August 1980*

# Notes and documents

## The Filipino and the Bangsa Moro people: report of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal*

### The fundamental grievances of the Filipino people

1 The social and economic situation of the great majority of the people is one of misery and oppression. A 1971 University of the Philippines study reports that 69% of the rural people live below the poverty line. In 1975 that proportion rose to 71.3%. Malnutrition plagues 70% of the population and, according to the Food and Nutrition Research Institute, causes fully 40% of mortality. In 1975 unemployment reached 40%, which is 9.6 million persons. In Metro-Manila, 1.5 million people live in slums. In the countryside, there are 4 million landless squatters.

2 The situation of the Filipino people is not unique. It is common to most of the Third World countries, dominated as they are by an expanding capitalist economy which, in the present phase of concentration and transnationalisation, maximises and accelerates. As a result, countries like the Philippines are brought into a growing dependency on powerful economic institutions which are then able to dictate policy in the fields of investment: wages, capital repatriation, profit remittances, etc. This policy promotes, at one and the same time, both economic growth and the impoverishment of the majority of the people. Following this contradictory pattern, the Gross National Product grew from 77.958 million pesos in 1977 to 82,477 million pesos in 1978;

*Excerpts of three sections of the report of the Tribunal, which was held in Antwerp, 30 October-3 November 1980.

the real income of the rice-peasants decreased 53.4% between 1976 and 1979; the real income of urban workers fell 39% between 1972 and 1978. While in 1952 the average worker received 0.36 pesos on each peso produced as value, in 1971 the same worker received only 0.24, and in 1975 only 0.09. Clearly, when profit and economic power become the exclusive criteria for production, 'growth' results in a total neglect of human beings and the natural environment. The internationalisation of the market economy thus deprives the people of the right to determine for themselves their economic and cultural fate.

3 It is also true that, in spite of the problems it has in common with other Third World countries, the Philippines is in some ways unique. It is a former colony of the US and continues to live in an unfinished process of decolonisation; it is tied by a number of treaties and agreements of a political and economic nature to the US. In 1946 parity rights were conceded to US citizens, for persons as well as for corporations. In 1951 the Quirino-Foster Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation established the principle of a close American supervision over economic policy-making. The Laurel-Langley Agreement of 1954 tied the Filipino monetary system to the dollar, whose value in pesos could not be changed without the approval of the US. This pattern of unequal treaties with the US gave it virtual control over the Philippine Government and opened the door to such treaties with other countries, including Japan especially. It should be added that US investments represent 80% of the total foreign investments in the Philippines and 60% of the total American investment in Southeast Asia.

4 The economic exploitation of local resources, including natural capital, and local agricultural and industrial manpower has been increasing in recent years. This comes from the role played by outside economic powers, particularly transnational corporations and foreign commercial banks. In 1978 there were 324 multinational enterprises, representing 52.6% of the total sales and 66.7% of the total income of the top 1,000 corporations. Among the transnational corporations, agribusiness is an important activity. Four corporations own 27,000 hectares of banana land: among them Del Monte, which owns 9,000 hectares of pineapple plantations, and Dole. Among the foreign-owned mines, Benguet plays an important role. In the industrial field the Mitsui group has important investments and in the banking field the Chase Manhattan Bank should be mentioned.

5 Through political measures and in particular through the establishment and institutionalisation of Martial Law, now a permanent and indispensable instrument of rule, the Government of Marcos serves as an intermediary for this international economic exploitation, and as an agent of local oppression. During the two years preceding Martial Law, foreign investments amounted to $16.3 million, and during the two years after it (1972-3) new investments rose to $362.1

million. The increase in the capital of foreign firms which were already present in the Philippines when Martial Law was promulgated was 1,100%, growing from 83.7 million pesos to more than one billion. These increased profits were built on the repressive control of labour and of democratic institutions. General Order No 5 prohibits the right to strike. Decree No 21 gives businesses the right to dismiss without notice any worker opposing productive policy. Decree No 143 abolishes Sunday as an obligatory holiday for the workers. Decree No 148 reduces the advantages given to pregnant women. Decree No 823 reinforces General Order No 5 by forbidding any foreign organisation from giving direct or indirect support to workers' organisations, except through the official unions recognised by the Ministry of Labour. Arbitrary arrests of hundreds of individuals took place, including three senators and several priests. Many of those arrested are still in detention. An executive prohibition on all forms of public protest was imposed; the writ of *habeas corpus* was suspended; newspapers and television and radio stations were closed, and government employees were arbitrarily dismissed.

6 Part of the Filipino dominant classes are associated with this exploitation process, building up their wealth and power by participating in political power and through subservient functions in the local operations of international corporations. They have accumulated massive fortunes through corrupt economic practices. For instance, Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile has been able to acquire control over the entire coconut industry, through his influence in government. At the same time, coconut workers (who, with their dependants, number 15 million people) became the category of workers most affected by the real wage cuts. The same Mr Enrile also accumulated a great amount of real estate.

7 In implementing its policies, the Marcos Government has particularly infringed the rights of ethnic minorities, like the Kalingas and the Bontocs, who have been deprived of their land, without proper compensation or relocation, and culturally destroyed. Several leaders of minorities have been tortured and assassinated.

8 The Marcos Government has also engaged in a full-scale war against the Bangsa Moro people, using the Philippine army, air force and navy for the bombing of villages. This violent action has been accompanied by mass murders and the expulsion of thousands of people from their homeland, resulting in 200,000 people becoming refugees.

9 The economic policies followed by the Philippine Government have been increasingly guided and even framed by international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank. The principal features of such policies, particularly since 1972 (Martial Law), are the unrestricted flow of foreign investment and profit; the dismantling of the protective

tariff structure; the industrialisation of the export sector through centralisation of the marketing of several export commodities; and the provision of cheap unorganised labour. So, for instance, the extension of sugar and coconut plantations (by 663,000 hectares between 1972 and 1976) resulted in a diminution of rice production (3.2 million tons in 1960, against 3.1 million in 1978), in spite of the population increase; a deficit of 400,000 tonnes. The average rice consumption is only 76 kgs per year, as against 104 kgs in the other ASEAN countries, whereas the necessary minimum is estimated by the World Health Organisation at 114 kgs. The foreign aid programmes mainly reinforce the same economic policy. The Center for International Policy, Washington DC, estimates that between 1976 and 1978 only 22% of US aid went into projects directly benefiting the poor. The rest went into tobacco loans, insurance for a Bank of America branch office, military aid, rural electrification (priced out of the reach of the poor) and balance of payments loans conditional on the adoption of government policies that reduce real wages for the poor. In that same period, military aid increased by 138%.

10 The support given by the US Government has internal security dimensions, such as fir ancial contributions for a military build-up, training for counter-insurgency, legal authority for military units to perform security activities off military bases in Philippine territory. When the military budget of the Philippines went from 584 million pesos in 1972 to 2,449 million in 1978 (at the same time as the education budget went from 1.360 million to 1.499 million), military assistance from the US, which was $60.2 million between 1970 and 1972, nearly doubled to $118.8 million between 1973 and 1975. But this US military presence also has international dimensions, the US bases serving to control the Pacific and the Indian oceans and even to intervene in the Middle East. This close relationship between the Marcos regime and the US Government belies the former's claim of being a 'non-aligned' state.

11 Facing such oppression, the Filipino and the Bangsa Moro peoples, having lost most of the democratic means of defence and of expression, have organised themselves in underground resistance movements and even in armed struggle, the legitimacy of such resistance arising from the oppression itself.

**Fundamental grievances of the Bangsa Moro people**

The situation of the Bangsa Moro people also reflects the experience of the Filipino people under the Marcos regime of 'permanent' Martial Law described in the preceding section. In this section we call particular attention to the additional experience of repression endured by the Bangsa Moro people.

1 For centuries the southern islands existed as separate sultanates. Even during the American colonisation of the Philippines, in spite of formal integration, the separate status of the Moros was recognised by special arrangements and policies. It was lost only in the treaty of independence from the US in 1946, which merged the southern islands, in spite of Moro protests, into one entity with the northern Philippines.

2 The southern islands have had a distinct culture. At the beginning of US colonial rule at the turn of the century, the population of Mindanao and Sulu was 98% Muslim. A programme of government-sponsored colonisation with northern Philippine Christian settlers began in 1912. It was greatly accelerated by the Public Land Act of 1919, which declared the ancestral lands of the Moro and other indigenous peoples public lands, title to which would henceforth be issued by the government in Manila. The rate of infiltration of Moro areas with settlers from the north has increased markedly since 1946, particularly under the Marcos regime, so that now the Muslims comprise only 60% of the population, Christian Filipinos 25%, while the remaining 15% are distributed among other ethnic groups.

3 The southern islands are predominantly rural, with few and small cities. Development in the sense of industrial and large-scale enterprises is new, foreign, and still in its beginnings. The northern islands are ahead in this regard. For this reason the Moros feel almost as greatly threatened by Filipino entrepreneurs and exploitation as by the neocolonial powers. As one Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) representative said, 'We feel that the Filipinos come halfway between the Americans and us.' We have the impression that the Moros are struggling to regain their lost farms, to retain their *barrio* tradition and, if it comes to that, to determine and carry out their own technological development.

4 The Moros are being subjected to a planned and accelerating programme of displacement from their ancestral lands and physical extermination. Of the 5.5 million Moros, roughly half are already refugees, and about 250,000 have emigrated to the Malaysian province of Sabah. It has been suggested that such emigration is being fostered by the present Philippine regime. To put it plainly, the Moros are felt to be 'in the way' in their own homeland, and a policy of displacement and extermination is in progress, reminiscent of that which involved the American Indians when they got in the way of the western expansion of the white population of the United States.

5 What is planned for the southern islands is not primarily industrial development, but exploitation as a source of raw materials and food. In the little industry that has so far been developed by outsiders, the Moros are hardly involved. They are not wanted either as workers or consumers, since major products are intended for export. The southern islands are fabulously wealthy in resources. At present,

Mindanao produces half of all the corn and coconut in the Philippines, 20% of all rice, 50% of fish, 40% of cattle, almost all exported bananas and pineapples, 89% of nickel and cobalt, 90% of iron ore, 62% of limestone, almost all aluminium ore (bauxite), 72% of logs and all the rubber. Yet the islands of Mindanao and Sulu cover hardly more than one-third the land area of the Philippines and contain less than one-fourth of the total population.

6 That population is now stratified into a small elite of industrialists and landlords, mainly Filipino and foreign, only a remnant deriving from the old Muslim aristocracy; a large number of new Filipino farmers, poor and with small holdings of a few hectares, and the Moros. In his report to the World Bank on 21 September 1970, Robert McNamara, its President, spoke of what he called 'marginal men'. These, he explained, are not merely unemployed; there is no use for them in the market economy. They are not needed either as producers or consumers. They are not only in the way, their very existence is an embarrassment. The American, Japanese and European entrepreneurs and the Philippine ruling elite have apparently decided to regard the entire Bangsa Moro people as 'marginal' in just this sense, and are proceeding callously and brutally to remove them from their homelands, by displacement and genocide, as impediments to their planned programme of so-called development, the exploitation for profit of the rich resources of the southern islands.

7 The struggle of the Bangsa Moro people, as represented by the MNLF and the Bangsa Moro Army, has achieved significant international recognition. In this context, reference should be made to the recognition of the MNLF by the Islamic Conference which led to negotiations, and a consequent agreement (the Tripoli Agreement of 23 December 1976), between the MNLF and the Marcos regime. This agreement represents formal recognition of the MNLF by the Philippine Government.

8 The international recognition of the armed struggle of the Bangsa Moro people places an obligation on the Philippine Government to respect fully the provisions of the Geneva Conventions in relation to the combatants of the MNLF. It also places an obligation on international bodies to allow the MNLF to take part in their activities.

**Judgement on the appeals of the Filipino people and the Bangsa Moro people**

1 The Tribunal finds that the Marcos regime by its reliance on 'permanent' Martial Law and numerous blatant abuses of state power is deprived of legitimate standing as a government in international society and lacks the competence to act on behalf of the Filipino or Bangsa Moro peoples;

2 The Tribunal finds that treaties and agreements imposed by the United States on the Philippines, admittedly with the complicity of successive Philippine governments, are null and void as 'unequal treaties', and that all obligations incurred under them should cease forthwith. In this connection, the Tribunal declares invalid the latest international trade agreement, signed in October 1979 and known as the Collantes-Murphy Agreement, being a replacement for the expired Laurel-Langley Agreement of 1954. It also finds null and void the Military Bases Treaty of 1947 and its recent extension in 1979 by Executive Agreement;

3 The Tribunal condemns in the most rigorous terms the programme of displacement and physical extinction that is now being waged by the Marcos regime against the Bangsa Moro people and has already deprived them of much of their ancestral land and made roughly half of their number refugees and exiles; the cumulative effect of this programme has been the commission of the crime of genocide;

4 The Tribunal considers that the abuses of the Marcos regime have contributed excessively to the degradation of women and to their economic and sexual exploitation;

5 The Tribunal condemns, also, the United States Government for its role in sustaining, supporting and encouraging the Marcos regime to act on behalf of its economic and global strategic interests in violation of the rights of the Filipino and Bangsa Moro peoples and calls upon it to cease such activities in support of state crime forthwith and to renounce all of its 'rights' obtained by way of unequal treaties and to respect from now on the full sovereignty of the country, including the status of the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) as legitimate representatives of their respective peoples;

6 The Tribunal, in this regard, calls on world public opinion to be especially vigilant of possible attempts by the United States Government to replace the Marcos dictatorship with another dependent, neocolonial regime during this period of increasing popular resistance to a government that has lost its credibility and capability;

7 The Tribunal also notes that the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, despite the stated purpose 'to help raise the living standards of the developing countries', are playing a crucial role in sustaining, supporting and encouraging the Marcos regime, despite its commission of systematic state crimes, and calls upon these international financial institutions to terminate these relationships that abet the violation of the rights of peoples and are responsible for disrupting the life and threatening the very existence of such tribal peoples as the Igorot and Kalinga through their support for high-technology hydro-electric projects;

8 The Tribunal censures a series of American, Japanese and

European multinational corporations for their role in violating the sovereign rights of the Filipino and Bangsa Moro peoples, including their legally protected right to sovereign control over natural resources, and calls upon these corporations to cease their activities, compensate the Filipino and Bangsa Moro peoples for the depredation of their resources, and to avoid all further interference in the internal life of the Philippines;

9 The Tribunal censures also the transnational commercial banks for their role in sustaining the illegal and criminal activities of the Marcos Government and of multinational corporations and calls upon these banks to cease their lending activities that reinforce criminal undertakings harmful to the Filipino and Bangsa Moro peoples;

10 The Tribunal also denounces the various actions of non-governmental organisations, including the educational, religious and trade union organisations, to the extent that they lend support to the Marcos regime by supporting economic projects reinforcing the existing social order, by training local elites and by misleading workers and peasants, through the formation of fake organisations that pretend to work for the people but are in reality tools of the regime;

11 The Tribunal finds Ferdinand Marcos guilty of grave and numerous economic and political crimes against his own people and against the Bangsa Moro people and declares him unfit to govern and subject to severe punishment for his past wrongs, including economic plunder and failure to protect the sovereignty of his country from neocolonial interventions;

12 The Tribunal finds the corrupt and plundering Marcos 'entourage' guilty as accomplices and perpetrators of numerous political and economic crimes and declares them subject to punishment by an appropriate criminal tribunal;

13 The Tribunal acknowledges that the Bangsa Moro people are entitled to the right of self-determination; it welcomes also the guarantee by the MNLF that should the Bangso Moro people decide to establish a separate state, all minorities are entitled to entirely equal rights irrespective of race, religion or national origin; further, the Tribunal welcomes the common position of the NDF and of the MNLF on the crucial issue of self-determination;

14 The Tribunal concludes that the armed struggle between the Marcos regime and the Filipino and Bangsa Moro peoples qualifies in international law as a condition of belligerency and that, accordingly, the parties should respect fully the provisions of the Geneva Convention on the laws of war, an observation made necessary by the numerous atrocities committed by the Marcos soldiers over the years;

15 The Tribunal calls upon world public opinion, progressive governments, organisations and individuals to lend their support to the struggle of the Filipino and Bangsa Moro peoples to achieve national

self-determination and liberation from the Marcos regime and the neocolonial system of repression.

# What is the French CP up to?

On 6 November 1980 *L'Humanité*, the Communist daily, published a statement from the Party's political bureau on the housing of immigrant workers, clearly indicating that the Party intended to award first priority in future to French nationals. Whilst paying lip service to the difficulties encountered by immigrants, the statement made no further analysis of the roots of the present problems, but declared itself opposed to the concentration of immigrant workers in Communist-controlled working-class areas:

> Already in some areas the different immigrant communities represent between 20 and 30% of the population.
>
> Thus workers from different traditions, customs and life-styles are grouped together. This concentration creates a tense atmosphere, sometimes with clashes between different nationalities, and ethnicities, and between them and French families.[1]

The statement outlined the social problems of working-class areas and committed the Party to support any of its elected representatives who 'fight racism' by refusing to accept the burden caused by right-wing municipalities thrusting immigrant workers on them and by giving priorities in welfare and housing to French workers. The statement further demanded an 'equitable distribution' of immigrants among different French communities. In a television interview, Georges Marchais, Secretary-General of the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF), said it was 'inadmissible to let in new immigrants when there were two million unemployed in France'.[2]

The following month this statement was expressed in the sacking of a hostel for immigrant workers in Vitry, but there had already been a trend in Communist policy of at least ambivalence to the immigrant community.

The September 1980 renewal of the Franco-Algerian agreement on immigrant workers passed with scarcely a comment from *L'Humanité*. The agreement, which includes provisions for the voluntary repatriation of Algerians, was merely reported in the Communist press; the only disquiet was expressed by the independent left-wing daily, *Liberation*.

Later in the autumn there were further indications of the worsening climate. The Secretary of the Communist Federation of the Val d'Oise declared the level of immigration 'too high' and opposed the

concentration of foreign children in schools. In Vérnisseaux the *Deputé* and Communist Mayor spoke of a 'threshold of tolerance' – an immigrant population of below 10 per cent in any community could be tolerated, above that trouble could be expected. This pseudo-scientific theory, based on the 1950s American 'threshold of tolerance' theorising, played an important part in the debate in the popular press after the Vitry incident. However, in Levallois-Perret the philosophy was turned into action by the Communist council, who printed posters saying 'No to Immigrant Hostels'.

On 19 November a dispute arose between the management of a SONACOTRA* hostel in Saint-Denis (in the north of Paris) and the 400 immigrants living there. When the CRS (riot police) evicted the immigrants, the Communist local authority provided them with temporary accommodation. The prolongation of the dispute forced the workers to ask for further help on 23 December, but the Communists used force to throw them out of the town hall. They are still agitating for decent permanent accommodation.[3]

On 24 December the shocking display of physical force took place at Vitry. Three days earlier 300 Malian workers had been moved from their dilapidated hostel in Saint-Maur (in the southern suburbs of Paris) to neighbouring Communist-controlled Vitry. The move was carried out by the Association for the Development of Hostels for Building and Metal Workers (ADEF) who were tenants. Then, on Christmas Eve, nearly fifty people, led by Vitry's Communist Mayor, Paul Mercieca, and with a bulldozer bringing up the rear, arrived outside the hostel 'to discuss with the workers'. The situation rapidly became violent, and the deputation used the bulldozer to wreck the entrance and stairs. Council workmen severed electricity cables, gas and water pipes, smashed the central heating boilers, ripped out telephones and tore doors off their hinges. Insurance investigators estimated the damage at 300,000 francs (approximately £3,000), having suggested that it was the work of 'experts' and therefore probably premeditated.

On 27 December *Le Travailleur* (the Vitry Communist paper) carried the following:

> On Wednesday there was a demonstration. Paul Mercieca, Mayor of Vitry, Guy Poussy, Federal Secretary of the PCF, and Marcel Rosette, Senator, took part. The demonstrators were not only expressing their anger but also demanding that the Prefect and Mayor of Saint-Maur should accept their responsibilities. They broke down the entrance-gates of the hostel, which should not have been opened, with a bulldozer. Water, gas and electricity were cut off.

It appears that this 'demonstration' was an attempt to implement the

*The government organisation which builds and runs immigrants hostels.

policies as outlined in the statement of 6 November. The hostel was destined for French workers, so the Mayor saw himself as protecting their interests.

It was only on 3 January that *L'Humanité* mentioned 'these regrettable incidents', from which the Mayor had disassociated himself. However, the Communist press in general expressed a hardening of attitudes around the issue. Georges Marchais stated:

> Frankly I give my unqualified approval to the action of my friend, Paul Mercieca, Mayor of Vitry, in opposing the racist aggression of the Giscardian Mayor of Saint-Maur. Generally I approve of his refusal to allow more immigrant workers in his area.[4]

'L'affaire Vitry' sparked off widespread condemnation from those who had a credible anti-racist record as well as from members of the government who have been responsible for repressive laws. The newspaper *Libération*, in particular, focused attention on the policies of other Communist local governments and examples started to flood in.

On 30 December sixty North African workers were expelled from three small hotels in the centre of Bagnolet, near Paris, by the Communist council. The hotels were closed because they were 'insanitary', but no alternative accommodation was made available. Eventually, the immigrants found temporary rooms in a SONACOTRA hostel in the Socialist-controlled area of Villemouble.[5]

Further afield in Brittany, there was Communist opposition to the building of a cultural centre in Rennes for the 3,000-strong Muslim population. The Federal Secretary of the PCF stated: 'We oppose HLM (council housing) and cultural ghettos, we are against the concentration of immigrants in racist hostels.' During a heated public debate the Socialists defended the Islamic centre, while the Communists claimed to represent 'local interests'.

On 16 January *Libération* published letters from the Communist-controlled local governments of Nanterre and Saint Denis (both in the Paris area) which showed that French citizens from the West Indies were being discriminated against in the allocation of housing, under a quota system which went back at least to September 1980. The letters, turning down housing applications, spoke of the area being 'saturated with applications from foreign families and those from Overseas Territories'. Specifically, they spoke of tension caused by 'frequent parties, socialising, loud voices and music' in blocks of flats.

The Communist Mayor of Vaulx-en-Velin, a suburb of Lyon, went even further. In a letter dated 3 December, published in *Libération* on 23 January, he stated that French citizens from the West Indies would be refused municipal housing even if already living locally because there were 'already too many here'. The familiar reason – the

'harmful effects' of a concentration of immigrants – was again given. In Ivry, the local government announced that henceforth a quota system would operate on the municipally-organised holidays for the children of poorer workers. Immigrant children could only make up 15 per cent of the total in future.

On 7 February the weekly anti-racist paper *Sansfrontiers* revealed that two Communist local governments, in Nanterre and Montfermeil, were refusing housing applications to immigrants who wanted their families to join them in France. Communists were succeeding where Stoléru, the reactionary Secretary of State for Immigrant Workers, had tried and failed!

In southern France, in Seyre-sur-Mer, near Toulon, the Communist local authority extended the persecution to an encampment of gypsies who had been trying to gain permission for a permanent site for more than a year. Methods similar to those in evidence at Vitry were used: essential services were cut off and the entrance to the camp was rendered impassable by a bulldozer.[6]

Meanwhile, the campaign was taking another turn. At a press conference on 2 February the Communist Mayor of Montigny announced a campaign against the sale and use of drugs. He threatened to reveal the identity of the dealers if the traffic did not stop, and called on local citizens to give information about anyone who might be involved. Four days later local young Communists named a Moroccan family and called a demonstration outside their flat. Subsequently, their action was endorsed by Marchais and the PCF leadership.[7] But the evidence was insubstantial and the police refused to act. At the time of writing the shocked family is considering legal proceedings against the Communists.

The Communist campaign against the immigrants has given rise to many different reactions. What is most difficult to bring to light are those within the Party itself. The anti-racist organisation MRAP (Anti-Racist Movement for Friendship Between Peoples), which, although pluralist in composition is certainly not unfriendly to the Communists, published an article in *Droit et Liberté* (November/December 1980) which demolished any suggestion of a causal link between immigration and unemployment. The Communist-controlled union, the CGT (*Confédération Générale de Travailleurs*) issued a communiqué on 2 January deploring the incident at Vitry. A few days later thirty-five members of the Party, mainly intellectuals, announced that the recent campaign was the final straw in their rejection of the policies and leadership of Marchais. In their resignation letter they stated: 'Our departure is part of the struggle for socialism in liberty.' Journalists on *L'Humanité*, among whom there has been long-standing disquiet about Communist policy, disquiet which reached a peak last summer, refused to cover the issue of Vitry if it meant simply reporting the Party

line. Many of them have joined the intellectuals in refusing to support Marchais' Presidential candidature.

In early February a Communist militant confided to *Libération*: 'We're a mass party and it is to be expected that we reproduce the flaws of society in general – including racism – but we're struggling against it.'[8]

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February 1981

## References

1 *L'Humanité* (6 November 1980).
2 Reported in the *Guardian* (15 January 1981).
3 *Libération* (24, 28 December 1980).
4 Quoted in *Tumulte* (January 1981).
5 *Libération* (2 January 1981).
6 *Libération* (4 February 1981).
7 *Libération* (11 February 1981).
8 *Libération* (4 February 1981).

# Book reviews

## *Transnational production: the latest development of underdevelopment*

*The New International Division of Labour: structural unemployment in industrialised countries and industrialisation in developing countries*

By FOLKER FROBEL, JURGEN HEINRICHS and OTTO KREYE, translated by PETE BURGESS (London, Cambridge University Press, 1980). 406pp. £25, cloth.

*Trade in Place of Migration*

By U. HIEMENZ and K.W. SCHATZ (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1979). 94pp. Swiss F17.50, paper.

A major factor in the postwar west European economic boom was the import of migrant labour from former colonies, or from peripheral regions of Europe (the Mediterranean, Ireland, Finland). Migrant workers were cheap for capital, because they were imported as 'ready-made' wage workers, whose upbringing had been paid for by the countries of origin. The 'guestworker' or contract-labour system developed by countries like Switzerland and West Germany aimed to minimise the reproduction costs of migrant workers by preventing the entry of dependants and prohibiting permanent settlement. Wages for unskilled labour were kept low, and this in turn held down unit labour costs at a time when economic growth and full employment would otherwise have caused them to soar. Countries like Sweden, Switzerland, France and West Germany, which made effective use of migrant labour, had high rates of capital accumulation, which prepared them for the next stage of capitalist development – the move to new technology and transnational production.

The strategy of west European capital towards migrant labour

changed dramatically in the mid-1970s. West Germany completely banned the entry of workers from outside the EEC in 1973; France followed suit a year later, and just about all west European countries introduced similar restrictive policies around the same time. Why? The official excuse was the so-called 'oil crisis' of 1973, but the ban is still in force, indicating deeper underlying causes. The first factor was the impossibility of permanently escaping the social costs of the reproduction of the migrant labour force. As migrant workers grew in number and stayed longer, they demanded the right to bring in their families, and called for better housing and social conditions. These demands were backed by the growth of political organisations and strike movements (West Germany's ban on entries was issued just after a strike-wave led by foreign workers). As governments were forced to concede better conditions, the profitability of migrant labour for capital declined. The second factor was the move of west European and multinational capital towards transnational production in low-wage Third World areas.

The two books reviewed here help us to understand the shift from labour import to capital export, and the new ideology which is being developed to justify the new policy. Both are concerned mainly, though not exclusively, with West German capital, and are products of West German research institutes – though very different ones. *The New International Division of Labour* is based on work done at the left-wing Starnberg Max-Planck-Institute, and is concerned with the exploitation of labour in 'off-shore production areas' in the Third World by West German capital. *Trade in Place of Migration* is the result of research financed by the Volkswagen Foundation and carried out at the Institute of World Economics at the University of Kiel, which is one of the five institutes specially appointed to advise the West German Government on economic policy. This institute is highly influential in ruling-class thinking. The focus of this study is the effect on labour markets of the former sending and receiving countries of labour migrants of the new strategy of capital export.

According to Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye, certain new factors have, for the first time in the 500-year history of the imperialist world economy, made the siting of manufacturing plants producing for the world market in the Third World profitable:

1 The breakdown of traditional economic and social structures in underdeveloped countries (the 'Green Revolution' being the most recent form of this) has led to an inexhaustible industrial reserve army.

2 The fragmentation of the production process makes it possible for most sub-processes to be carried out by unskilled workers after very short training.

3 The development of transport and communication technology makes it possible to carry out complete or partial production processes

at any site throughout the world without prohibitive technical, organisational or cost problems.

The analytical framework used in *The New International Division of Labour* is that of a single world capitalist economy, within which the individual economies of industrialised or underdeveloped countries are regarded as organic parts. (Socialist or state capitalist economies are excluded, except where they produce under contract for private capitalist countries.) The central thesis of the book is that the 'classic international division of labour', in which Africa, Asia and Latin America were pulled into the world economy as sources of raw materials and labour power (slaves and contract workers) to the detriment of their own industrial development, has been superceded by a 'new international division of labour'. This is marked by a world market for labour, a world-wide industrial reserve army and a world market for production sites. Production processes are split up into sub-processes which are carried out anywhere in the world, according to where the most profitable combination of capital and labour can be found. In this system of 'transnational production', national and multinational companies move parts of production processes out of high-wage economies, into countries where there is a large industrial reserve army to keep wages down. Typically, only part of a complete product is made in the 'off-shore factory'. For instance, trousers are cut out on automatic machines in West Germany, flown in air-containers to Tunisia, where they are sewn together and packed, and then flown back to West Germany for marketing. Or an American electronics company produces masks and wafers for integrated circuits in the US (a highly automated process), flies them to South-east Asia, where they are soldered into capsules (labour intensive), and then returns them to the US for testing and sale.

Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye present a great wealth of empirical evidence to show the changing structure of the world economy. This is divided up into three case studies. The first is an analysis of the West German textile and clothing industry, showing how the number of employees within the Federal Republic has steadily fallen, while the number of workers employed abroad by the same companies has grown. Up to the mid-1960s, most West German factories abroad were in developed countries – the EEC or Austria. Since then, most new factories have been set up in North Africa or South-east Asia. Textiles and clothing have long been regarded as crisis sectors within the otherwise prosperous West German economy. This study shows that the crisis only affects the workers and the regions hit by plant closures – the companies themselves continue to thrive through exporting production to low wage countries.

The second study examines the foreign investments of 602 West German companies not belonging to the textile and clothing industry.

Virtually all major companies now produce abroad, as do many small and medium-sized ones. The leaders in transnational production are the engineering, chemical and electrical goods industries. In 1975, West German industry employed well over half a million workers abroad. This shows that West German capital is not – as is often claimed – shifting its orientation from manufacturing to services, but rather that manufacturing is being moved out of Germany into Third World countries, while remaining under the control of West German or multinational capital. West German overseas investment leapt from DM19,932 million in 1971 to DM47,048 in 1976. This trend is closely linked to the stagnation of employment in western Europe since 1973.

The final study presents data on 'off-shore production areas' in 103 Asian, African and Latin American countries. In the mid-1960s there was virtually no industry producing for the markets of industrial countries in underdeveloped countries. Ten years later, thousands of factories in Third World countries were producing almost exclusively for the markets of developed countries. One might think that this meant a move towards industrialisation and development, but the truth is far from this, because the trend has been towards a new type of industrial siting in duty-free enclaves. The first was set up in Taiwan in 1966, and was soon followed by others throughout South-east Asia and Latin America.

In the duty-free enclaves, what Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye call 'world market factories' make products (or parts of products) destined almost exclusively for export, using cheap unskilled local labour. Machines, designs and management come from developed countries, which maintain absolute control of the production process. The governments of the underdeveloped countries are led to believe that setting up duty-free enclaves will reduce unemployment, raise wages and speed industrialisation. But all these hopes are in vain: the number employed in relation to the unemployed population is so low that wage-levels do not improve. If they do – as in Singapore to some extent – the foreign investors pull out. There is little training, as the companies only want cheap unskilled labour, and supporting industries are rarely set up.

The population of the areas concerned has to pay a high price. Sharp competition between the enclaves to attract investors forces tax concessions and special laws on capital and profit repatriation. Foreign companies put pressure on governments to remove restrictions on wages, hours and working conditions, to discipline unions and keep workers in line. The favourite form of government among western companies is the military dictatorship, and they often help to create it. Investors demand ready-made factory buildings with energy, water and harbour facilities. It often costs more to set up a production enclave than it ever brings in. The predominant reasons for investment

in such enclaves are the low wages (usually below US$0.50 per hour) and the long working hours (48 hours per week is common). The overwhelming majority of the workers employed in 'world market factories' are young women – usually from rural areas – whose labour power is sucked out at such a rate that they are invalids by the age of 25 or 30. The abysmal wages and the rapid draining of the labour power of the easily replaceable workers means that the traditional sectors of the economy are subsidising the modern one, rather than the other way round – a new form of primitive accumulation for international capital.

*The New International Division of Labour* first appeared in German in 1977, but it has only just become available in English (in an excellent translation by Pete Burgess). Three years is a long time in this field, so that some of the work's hypotheses and evidence seem dated. In the meantime there has been a trend towards export not only of labour-intensive but also of capital-intensive production processes, for Third World labour can more easily be forced to do shift work and accept the dangerous working conditions which increase profitability. If the strength of the book lies in the volume and clarity of its empirical evidence, its weakness lies in a failure to present a coherent theoretical explanation of this new stage of imperialism. An historical analysis of changes in the structure of the world economy is lacking. Nor is any effort made to explain the new development in the light of the political economy of capital accumulation. The emphasis on West German capital and on the duty-free enclaves also presents a somewhat one-sided picture, neglecting the role of other forms of international integration of capital, and ignoring the growing part played by national capital in some Third World areas.[1] But altogether the book is a useful and committed piece of research. It is worth noting that the West German Government has just decided to close down the Starnberg Max-Planck-Institute, for the results of its work do not match up with official requirements.

Nobody, on the other hand, could accuse Hiemenz and Schatz of betraying the interests of West German capital. Their study, *Trade in Place of Migration*, is also concerned with the shift from labour import to capital export, but its aim seems to be the provision of an ideological justification for this strategy. In the 1960s, the states of the labour-importing countries and the international organisations which linked them (like the International Labour Office (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)) used to claim that labour migration speeded the industrialisation of the countries of origin. When western Europe decided to stop the entry of workers and to encourage repatriation, new ideologies were put forward to show that sending the migrants home was actually doing the countries of origin a favour. *Trade in Place of Migration* is a part of this effort, and

was published along with similar studies in the framework of the 'World Employment Programme' of the ILO.[2] The basic message of the book is that Third World countries can only hope for industrial development through complete subjugation of their economies to the interests of multinational capital.

The starting point for Hiemenz and Schatz is an analysis of the changing structure of the West German labour market, showing that the industries most affected by restructuring are those which employ the highest proportions of migrant and women workers. They predict growing rates of unemployment for these two groups. However, foreign workers will still be needed in certain sectors: 'heavy manual labour, work in noisy or evil-smelling conditions, and work in shifts, at night or on assembly lines ... Hence, they can fill structural gaps in the domestic supply of labour.'

The study goes on to examine the effects of the ban on labour migration for two countries of origin: Spain and Turkey. Hiemenz and Schatz praise the economic course of the Franco regime in the 1960s and early 1970s – throwing the country open to foreign capital while suppressing the labour movement – as a far-sighted model for a progressive development strategy. Turkey, on the other hand, is strongly criticised for attempts at import-substitution (i.e. developing national industries), for lack of concessions to foreign capital and for allegedly excessive wages and social costs. Turkish economic development, the study concludes, is hampered by two main problems:

> One is the inappropriate structure of the Turkish economy, which greatly affects the country's ability to participate in international trade. The other, which is closely connected with the former and has limited the possibilities for development, is the lack of attraction for foreign investment. The fact that a developing country gives free access to foreign investment is evidently not enough in itself to attract capital; it must at the same time have an all-round policy that does not restrict the expansion of foreign firms to the poorly developed home market.

So what policies would make Turkey's economic structure 'appropriate' and attract foreign investors? Hiemenz and Schatz recommend a complete opening of Turkey's economy to the world market, with gradual removal of any sort of protective measures for weak national industries. Turkey should give up any attempt at setting up basic producer-goods industries, which are regarded as too capital-intensive for such an underdeveloped country. Instead, it should concentrate on labour-intensive production of simple consumer goods for the world market. State influence in industry should be reduced, and the appropriate tax and customs concessions made to draw in foreign capital. This would also entail corresponding fiscal and monetary measures

(such as the savage devaluation recommended by the IMF), as well as curbs on wages and social benefits. In essence, the strategy is that of turning Turkey into the sort of duty-free enclave for international capital described by Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye. But in return for the sell-out of their economy to meet the needs of western European (in particular West German) capital, the Turks are promised a rosy future of foreign investment, growing employment and gradual modernisation.

The whole argument is dressed up in a wealth of economic and statistical analysis. What is missing is the least sign of knowledge of the history of Turkey's relationship with the West, which would expose the weakness of the proposed solution. The last few hundred years of the Ottoman Empire before its collapse in the First World War were marked by ever-increasing concessions by the corrupt and inefficient regime to British, French, German and other foreign capital. Turkey never came under the direct rule of a European power, but it was economically plundered as much as any colony. This was the cause of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and of the Turkish revolution of the early 1920s, led by Mustafa Kemal Attatürk. In the period leading up to the Second World War, the new Turkish Republic followed a policy of national sovereignty, involving economic independence and planned industrialisation, based on state intervention and with the help of Soviet advisors. In this period, Turkey was able to show not only high growth rates but also a positive balance of payments.

After the Second World War, the Menderes and Demirel governments returned to a policy of development based on opening the country to foreign capital. Turkey joined NATO and became militarily, politically and economically dependent on the US. The result was economic stagnation and an ever-worsening balance of payments. The ruling class then turned its hopes to Europe, applying for membership of the Common Market in 1959. The Treaty of Association provided for a long period of transition, opening the economy preferentially to west European capital. The result has been a further deterioration of the situation, with growing unemployment (even with a million Turkish workers in EEC countries), stagnating or declining production and a catastrophic balance of payments deficit.

It is obvious that the linking of a weak underdeveloped economy to highly developed capitalist industrial countries must result in the complete subjugation of the former to the needs of the latter. No country has ever developed a national industrial base under conditions of free trade with powerful competitors, but this is just what the EEC claims to offer Turkey. The consequence has been the destruction of the Turkish economy and now the breakdown of the political system, with nother military take-over.

But this result of its own policies is not welcome to west European

capital. At a time of Islamic revival and serious tension in the Middle East, it now fears the collapse of the south-eastern flank of NATO. Hence the latest efforts of the German Federal Government to shore up the disintegrating structure of the Turkish state. *Trade in Place of Migration* is a part of these efforts, aimed at preventing the imminent collapse of the Turkish economy by persuading the Turkish ruling class to adopt a new form for the sell-out of the economy. Even if adopted whole-heartedly, the policy will fail, for it is nothing but a continuation of the policy which has destabilised the Turkish economy for centuries.

The two books are important reading for anyone who wants to understand the new strategies and ideologies of international capital. They show that the capitalist system as a whole is not going through an economic crisis. Rather, we are concerned with a process of restructuring of the world economy, in which the more advanced sections of west European, Japanese and US capital are moving parts of their production to low-wage countries, while maintaining control in their metropolitan centres. Such national capital is becoming multinational, while moving abroad in the form of industrial capital, within existing companies. More backward capital – to which many British companies belong – is becoming multinational in a different way: lack of capital accumulation and modernisation within the national economy in the postwar period means that whole sectors of production are becoming unviable and are being abandoned. The capital concerned is being transformed from industrial to financial capital, which moves abroad to be invested in successful multinational ventures. British capital is thus taking on a generally parasitical role in the development of transnational production, failing to maintain control of production within multinationals, or to gain a spin-off in terms of development of high-technology industries within Britain. This is why the crisis is earlier and deeper than in West Germany, France or Switzerland.

But capital in general is doing very nicely out of the move to transnational production. The crisis is not economic but rather a crisis of social relationships and political legitimacy. Capital simply does not need large sections of the population of Britain and other west European countries anymore, because their jobs are being exported. So these groups within the working class – blacks, migrants and women first of all – are being marginalised and their standard of living is under attack. This is the real meaning of the policies of the Thatcher Government, which are harbingers of a general attack on the British and indeed the European working class.

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## References

1 For more details of *The New International Division of Labour*, see the reviews of the German edition by myself and by David Jacobson, Ann Wickham and James Wickham in *Capital and Class* (No 7, Spring 1979).
2 The other Working Papers of the World Employment Programme are obtainable in mimeographed form from the ILO in Geneva.

### *Oil and Class Struggle*

Edited by PETTER NORE and TERISA TURNER (London, Zed Press, 1979). 307pp. £4.95

Capitalism functions on an increasingly integrated world scale, taking account of and often accentuating the very unevenness of the accumulation process. Lenin's awareness of this trajectory is what gave such force to his pamphlet on imperialism, despite the many problems that arise from attempting to apply his formulations to concrete historical events. In practice, thinking about capitalism on a world scale has been a notoriously difficult and elusive task, going as it does against the grain of so much ideologised, deeply internalised common wisdom about national economies. Since the 1960s, underdevelopment theory has helped to undermine much common wisdom, but the task of constructing a new outlook remains.

Petter Nore and Terisa Turner's tightly edited book is a real breakthrough towards our absorbing what is necessary for the development of such an outlook. Several questions of great importance run through the contributions, stimulated by the rise of OPEC, the enormously enhanced state revenues of the OPEC countries and the apparently consequent world-wide energy crisis. To what extent can OPEC revenues be used by member state in a process of national capital accumulation and to whose advantage? Given the imbalance in political strength between the advanced capitalist states and the OPEC countries, can the latter maintain their favourable market position and, if so, will it alter that imbalance? What are the implications of inter-capitalist struggles over energy resources for the working class, particularly in the poor countries?

An analytical starting-point is provided in a theoretical contribution of striking originality by Mohssen Massarrat, an Iranian who has been published primarily in German.* Massarrat attempts a rigorous analysis of oil revenues based on Marx's theory of rent developed in the third volume of *Capital*. From this, he derives a view of OPEC as landlords within a context of international accumulation, landlords successful in banding together to raise from industrial and finance

*But see his article on page 353 of this issue of *Race & Class*.

capital a better share of surplus profit. This success depended on the 'development of capitalism in the oil-rich societies themselves', a development that reached a certain stage of fruition by the 1970s. The result posed a crisis for western capital in general, although not for the oil companies. Massarrat notes, however, that the different energy situations in different OECD countries have made a common response far more difficult than among OPEC states, who share an obvious interest in maximisation of revenues.

Petter Nore proceeds to explain some of the ways in which the transnational oil corporations have been successful in riding the storm. He examines in detail the continued struggle between transnationals and OPEC states over control in the oil business, considering the effectiveness of OPEC regimes in functioning as state capitalists. He judges this effectiveness variable, depending on the ability of the state to command development and exploration techniques, to refine petroleum locally and to market it downstream. The advantages for the state of pursuing such options are argued for by Michael Tanzer with reference to oil exploration policy in Puerto Rico. Nore notes the partial success of certain countries along these lines, notably, Norway, Mexico and Algeria, but he demonstrates as well the immense power of the transnationals, power which rests on their financial linkages, and their ability to diversify and maintain control within the richest and most technologically diverse consumer markets.

Most OPEC countries fail to evolve coherent policies that might work towards a state-led accumulation process. Instead, the oil revenues reinforce comprador economies or are dissipated in the hands of a small number of corrupt officials able to act with impunity. The reason is to be understood primarily in terms of the existing productive forces and class relationships that prevail in OPEC countries. Nore's point is richly borne out by a survey of Libya, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Venezuela and the Canadian province of Alberta. This review cannot do justice to the analytical possibilities that emerge from such a survey. In general, the reader is struck by the constraints under which oil-led development has operated. At one extreme lies the case of Nigeria, where Terisa Turner discusses the conflict between technocrats and compradors, aligned to the private sector, within the state apparatus. It is an unequal battle: the comprador sector is enormously stronger given the present alignment of class forces in Nigeria. At the opposite extreme is Edward Shaffer's consideration of Alberta. Shaffer anticipates a pattern of state-led industrialisation and the rise of an Alberta-centred industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, albeit limited through its alliances with giant American oil firms. He stresses, however, that this development will be organised narrowly to the advantage of capital as opposed to labour. Wolfgang Hein's account of Venezuela depicts an intermediate case. Venezuelan oil has brought

about substantial industrialisation but also a ruined agriculture, a distorted and dehumanising urban environment and an extremely unbalanced economy with few benefits for the masses. Hein's piece, together with Joe Stork's on Iraq and Patrick Clawson's on Iran, are strong on historical analysis, relating the oil industry to the intensifying incorporation of local production into a web of western-dominated capitalist industry.

None of the contributions are sanguine about the prospects of petty-bourgeois bureaucrats forging strong, coherent national economies around oil revenues. However, they are cognisant of oil- and energy-related issues for workers' struggles everywhere. Renfrew Christie, who has since been imprisoned by the South African Government for making his research available to liberation groups, has written an interesting consideration from this perspective. Christie sees the increasing emphasis on energy as part of the general tendency for the organic composition of capital to increase, partly in response to class struggle, with important consequences for that struggle. Within oil-producing countries, the militancy of oil workers is highlighted in contributions by workers from Iran and from Trinidad and Tobago. In Iran, this militancy was crucial to the overthrow of the Shah's regime – especially interesting for any who still dismiss industrial workers in poor countries as a 'labour aristocracy'. Altogether, a stimulating, important book that points the reader in new directions.

Harvard University BILL FREUND

*Bias in Mental Testing*

By ARTHUR R. JENSEN (London, Methuen, 1980). 786pp. £15

For the last ten years a small army of sociologists, psychologists, biologists and mathematicians have found extensive employment clearing up the mystifications of a little group of psychometricians and biometricians whose prolific production is designed to prove – to their own satisfaction at least – that the IQ test is a fair and accurate measure of a human capacity called intelligence, and that differences found between individual and group performances on the tests – as well as many other aspects of human difference from political tendency to spinach eating – are largely innate. Unfortunately there is little sign that these psychometricians begin to understand the criticisms made of their work as they repetitively recycle the same material. One can only marvel at the continued capacity of Arthur Jensen and his friends to go on churning the stuff out.

In the decade since his *Harvard Educational Review* paper on IQ and scholastic achievement there have been *Genetics and Education,*

*Educability and Group Differences, Educational Differences* and now *Bias in Mental Testing*. The new book has been the subject of multiple reviews, and the key word 'Jensen' now appears as a citation term in the journal *Behaviour Genetics*. His publishers speak in marvelling terms of him as one of the most cited educational psychologists of all time. Not bad for one of whom the National Front organiser Martin Webster wrote: 'the most important factor in the build up of self-confidence amongst racists and the collapse of morale amongst multi-racialists was the publication in 1969 by Professor Arthur Jensen in the *Harvard Educational Review*'.[1]

When *Bias in Mental Testing* was reviewed in the *New York Review of Books* it was under the banner headline 'Jensen's last stand', but one fears that this is likely to be over-optimistic. The book is dedicated to the 'Great Pioneers' Galton, Binet and Spearman; it lacks the now perhaps incautiously fulsome tribute to Cyril Burt which graced earlier works of Jensen's, but granted Jensen's previous references to the 'seminal contributions' of his predecessors, he, at least, clearly anticipates continuing future stands in the effort to perpetuate the psychometric hereditarian lineage.

*Bias in Mental Testing* is, however, a step back from the genetic arguments of a good deal of Jensen's earlier writing. It is just as well, for he is no geneticist, or even biologist – he once embarrassed the Institute of Biology in London by referring to spiders as insects. Even in the present book he uses biological and biochemical terms wrongly. Like pre-evolutionary theory eighteenth-century biologists, he seems to believe in a 'scale of nature' on which all organisms are arranged in some grand linear progression of increasing perfectability, towards the ultimate perfection of humanity.

Similarly, he seems to believe that infants are merely diminutive versions of adults, with the same type of intelligence; just less of it. As he writes, 'beyond age two however, most of the variance in Stanford-Binet IQs is attributable to the same general factor at every age level'. Not merely is his general biology a trifle naive, to put it no more strongly; he is distinctly uncertain on brain structure and function and is hopelessly confused when referring to brain biochemical systems. So perhaps his retreat to what for him ought to have been the safer ground of psychometrics and statistics is a step forward. At any rate, in this book he is, on the surface, not concerned with whether the differences he claims exist in intelligence between racial groups are genetically determined, but rather with the nature of the tests themselves. I say on the surface, because there is inevitably a hidden hereditarian agenda which time and again comes perilously close to breaking out, and he is, as we shall see below, quite determined to demonstrate that, irrespective of the genetics, intelligence does have the characteristics of a unitary biological phenomenon.

However, to begin with the book's ostensible agenda. What it sets out to demonstrate is that, underlying all appropriately constructed tests, there is a unitary thing called intelligence. Different forms of test tap different aspects of this intelligence, like artesian wells drilled into different parts of a single underground reservoir. The evidence for this broadly unitary nature of intelligence comes from the degree of cross-correlation between tests – how much one set of tests agrees with another. Thus the title of the book, we learn very early on, does not refer to 'bias' in the common-or-garden sense, but to a strictly statistical sense. Actually it is not until page 375 that we get a definition of what Jensen means by bias. Having explained that he does not mean to fall into such traps as what he described as 'egalitarian' or 'culture-bound fallacies', he eventually comes clean and tells us that bias:

> is to be kept distinct from the concept of fairness-unfairness. In mathematical statistics 'bias' refers to a *systematic* under- or over-estimation of a population parameter by a statistic based on samples drawn from the population. In psychometrics 'bias' refers to systematic errors in the *predictive validity* or the *construct validity* of test scores of individuals that are associated with the individual's group membership [original emphasis].

In non-technical terms, what he is trying to show through most of the 780 or so pages of this book is that he is not fiddling his statistics in the effort to prove that in the US blacks do more poorly on IQ tests than do whites.

But this is entirely to miss the point of the criticisms which have been levelled at this type of psychometric approach. It really is not that he is in the main being statistically illegitimate – although technical reviews such as those by Attam Vetta and Jerry Hirsch[2] have criticised him extensively on this score as well. Rather, it is that Jensen believes that if his statistics are done properly then they will reveal some underlying biological reality. In a word, he reifies his statistical results, and then confuses the artefactual consequences of this reification with the 'proof' of something biological. For instance, a major argument in 'proving' the validity of group differences in IQ comes from the phenomenon of 'regression to the mean', whereby, if one looks at the IQ scores of the relatives of a high-IQ white child, they approach the average for the white population, whilst those of a high-IQ black child approach that for the black population. Such regression, says Jensen, indicates that the population average must reflect real biological differences in the two populations. But actually it does nothing of the sort; it is an inevitable property of the behaviour of any individual arbitrary number drawn out of a set of such numbers.

You could show the same effect by comparing the average income of workers in America or England, for instance, with those for any

particular English or American wage-earner. I am not arguing simply that you can prove anything with statistics, or that there are lies, damn lies and statistics. Statistical procedures represent an immensely powerful and sophisticated tool, that in unskilled hands will not generate meaningful scientific interpretations any more than monkeys on a typewriter are likely to produce a set of Shakespeare's plays.

It is precisely this naivete about statistics which enables Jensen to cling so pathetically to the peculiar belief of some psychometricians – which all neurobiologists and developmental biologists must know to be a nonsense – that there is a single unitary 'general intelligence factor', *g*, derived originally by Spearman and Burt. This interpretation comes out of the observation that the results of different IQ tests tend on the whole to agree with one another. The problem with this is that the argument is perfectly circular; tests that do not agree with the others and which do not arrange the population of those tested in some more or less linear fashion in a statistically 'normal' distribution, tend to be disregarded as poor discriminators. Nowhere in this book, so far as I can tell, does Jensen deal with the embarrassing fact that the standard Stanford-Binet IQ tests were altered in the 1930s to ensure that males and females scored equivalently on the tests; the differential scoring items which discriminated between boys and girls were either removed or were balanced. The point is that there is nothing wrong with this as a procedure – provided you recognise what you are doing, that is, using tests as social constructs. There is everything wrong with it if you believe that, either with or without the adjustments, the tests are tapping some underlying biological reality. Jensen still wants to argue that intelligence is simultaneously a concept and thing. It has to be a thing or one could not quantify it and use elaborate statistical and biometric procedures to measure heritabilities. On the other hand, when challenged with the arbitrariness of the procedure, Jensen, like other psychometricians, retreats into the claim that it is merely a concept, a useful heuristic that emerges from the statistical and testing procedures.

There is not the space, and it would anyhow be wearisome, to document at length all the naivetes and fallacies of the fifteen chapters of *Bias in Mental Testing*. Most depressing is that the book begins, in its first chapter, by listing a series of what must be 100 or more of the types of criticism of IQ tests and their supposed genetic basis that have been made over the course of the past decade. Although the criticisms are listed, Jensen avoids at all costs citing the names of any of the critics who have made the points concerned. Thus, for instance, the names of Chomsky, Harrington, Kamin, Lewontin, Layzer and Vetta, to name only a few of those who have attacked the claims of the IQ testers, do not appear in Jensen's name index. Only a brief reference is given, under the heading of 'Marxist' opposition to tests, to the pamphlets

produced by the Progressive Labor Party in the US and the books by Brian Simon and by Lawler, which are dismissed as 'strongly ideological and often sophistic'. The *coup de grace* is given by the statement that IQ testing or its equivalent is now employed extensively in the USSR! The level of the argument is equivalent to that used by Margaret Thatcher when she refers to the British Labour Party as marxists, and requires no further comment.

What is regrettable is that Jensen gives no evidence of having read and absorbed the repeated trenchant criticisms of his work made in the technical literature. What is even more disturbing is that, despite having assimilated the consequences of the Burt affair, prominent psychometricians are still prepared to give credence to this sort of approach. On the dust-cover of the book a laudatory quote from Professor Alan Clark and Dr Ann Clark of Hull University is given prominence. The distinguished educational psychologist Philip Vernon heads his review of the book 'anti-test views are refuted'.[3]

While educational psychologists and psychometricians are so wedded to out-dated and misleading statistical formulations, in the belief that they can cast any light on biological mechanisms or indeed on the complex social interactions that constitute the process and phenomenon that we describe as intelligence, there is little hope for the construction of an educational psychology which – even if not truly liberatory – can have some modest use in aiding our understanding of how and why all children learn, but some children learn better or worse than others. Jensen likens IQ tests to thermometers. If the thermometer tells you that you have fever, you do not get better by blaming it and throwing it away. But the test is not a thermometer, and it may well be infectious; applying it will create a disease where there was none before.

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1 Quoted in Martin Walker, *The National Front* (London, 1977).
2 *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* (No. 3, 1980).
3 Ibid.

*People Without a Country*

Edited by GERARD CHALIAND (London, Zed Press, 1980). 246 pp. Paper £3.95.

'Today's persecutors have often enough been the persecuted of yesterday', remarks Maxime Rodinson, the French marxist writer on the

Middle East, in his wry introduction to this excellent collection. Rodinson, although too polite to stress the point, is talking about the Iraqi Arabs who made their revolution in 1958 and then proceeded to impose new oppressions upon the Kurdish minority in their country. But his words have a sadly prophetic ring since they could have applied with even more force to the Iranian revolution where, since the fall of the Shah, the Kurdish people have been subjected to new horrors at the hands of the Islamic guards.

Even the war with Iraq has not brought respite to Iran's Kurds: unheard by the world, fighting has continued in Iranian Kurdistan and the majority of the Iranian left, which under the Shah supported the Kurds, is now aligned with the repressive policies of the Khomeini government. The situation in the third country with a substantial Kurdish population has, if anything, been worse: the Turkish revolution of 1919-21 ushered in a new nationalism which stamped on every sign of Kurdish freedom and culture. To this day the Kurdish language is banned from public life in Turkey. As the Turkish Kurd Kendal remarks in his discussion of this period, Kemalism, which was seen as anti-imperialist in the outside world, had, inside Turkey, a vicious and chauvinistic character.

Gerard Chaliand contributes two articles to this collection: one a general introduction to the problems of the Kurdish movement, the other a postscript on Iran. As Ismet Sheriff Vanly, an Iraqi Kurd, aptly remarks, the Kurds have been the victims of a 'poor people's colonialism', and Chaliand presses the often unwelcome point that the rise of Third World nationalism in general has been accompanied by new forms of chauvinistic oppression. The Kurdish writers who contribute different essays to this book, on Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, make the same point, bringing out the hypocrisies and torments of this 'poor people's colonialism'.

At the same time, they seek to understand the weaknesses within the Kurdish movement that have contributed to defeat after defeat: the persistence of tribal divisions, the pursuit of and trust in foreign allies, even the most reactionary (such as Israel and the US), and the way in which Kurds in one country have been played off against each other. Critical as they may be, however, they do not go all the way – for even the Kurds, victims of stronger nationalisms, have themselves played the oppressor game, as their participation in the massacres of the Armenians in Turkey during the First World War underlines. This unpleasant episode is passed over in silence by Kendal in his otherwise very illuminating study of the Kurds in Ottoman Turkey.

The left does not emerge with much credit from this story either. In Turkey, Iraq and Iran, Communist and other left-wing parties have occasionally gestured to Kurdish demands, but they have all too often swung behind the chauvinism of the central governments. Nor has the

USSR much to be proud of: it was Russian support that enabled the Iranian Kurds to set up an autonomous republic in 1946, but they did not give it the means to support itself and colluded in its destruction; the Russians provided the Iraqis with the material to attack the Iraqi Kurds in the 1974-5 war, even if the Iraqis now complain that the Russians did not help them enough; and after initially publicising the demands of the Iranian Kurds after the 1979 revolution, the Russians have now lined up behind the Tehran government.

The Kurds are, as their defenders never tire of pointing out, and rightly so, a separate nation of between ten and fifteen million people who have always been denied the right to self-determination. Many Kurdish political representatives accept that they will never obtain a fully independent state; but even moderate demands for autonomy have been systematically rejected, often by governments that trumpet their 'revolutionary' credentials to the world. The autonomous region in Iraq is a sham, and the Kurds have no more political freedom than anyone else in Baathist Iraq. The Iranian Kurds, who have time and again stressed their demand only for limited autonomy, have been denounced as foreign agents and assaulted both by the regular Iranian army and the Islamic guards. The new military regime in Turkey is carrying out widespread arrests and harassment in the eastern, Kurdish, parts of that country. The liberating potential of the dominant nationalisms in these states, or of a new militant Islam, holds few attractions for the Kurds. They want their rights and, on the basis of their history of struggle chronicled in this book, they are not a people to give up.

Transnational Institute FRED HALLIDAY

*After the Cataclysm: post-war Indochina and the reconstruction of imperial ideology*

By NOAM CHOMSKY and EDWARD S. HERMAN (Boston, South End Press, and Nottingham, Spokesman, 1980). 392pp.

Since the American military withdrawal from Indochina in 1975, the western media have been engaged in a propaganda battle to reconstruct imperial ideology, and the chief and chosen victims have been the Khmer Rouge and the people of Kampuchea. To this end western, and especially American, media have employed 'a highly selective culling of facts and much downright lying'.

Such is the chief contention of Chomsky and Herman in this the second volume of their *Political Economy of Human Rights*. They believe this 'system of brainwashing under freedom' in which

'questions of truth are secondary' has been a spectacular success. That success has been considerably aided by the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and by the Vietnamese use of themes taken from the earlier western propaganda. *After the Cataclysm* was published too soon after the Vietnamese invasion to deal very fully with it, but not so soon that the authors were not able to point to Kampuchean resistance to conquest as giving the lie to American and Vietnamese assertions. The message from Chomsky and Herman is that the US war against Indochina has not ceased but become political instead of military, and the Vietnamese invasion has given the US its first victory, a victory which it will not be slow to exploit.

The charges that the authors make against the American media and the predominant sections of the US intelligentsia come down chiefly to two. First, that none of them are concerned either about human rights or human suffering. These only become important to them when they are 'ideologically serviceable' to imperial purposes. Thus, the terrifying massacres and suffering that accompanied the attempt of the Indonesian government to conquer East Timor were (and are) almost totally ignored in the US (and Britain), for to expose them would have been to criticise an imperial tool. Similarly, the havoc and death wreaked in Kampuchea and throughout Indochina by US forces before 1975 is now not referred to, nor the earlier French repression, even though these underlie all the more recent events.

That leads to the second charge, namely that in western campaigns of denunciation, such as that against the Khmer Rouge, the critical faculty is suppressed and facts are 'selected, modified or sometimes invented to create a certain image'. This, the authors say, is true of academics as well as the press: 'Mainstream scholarship can be trusted to conform to the requirements of mythology, just as in true totalitarian societies.' Perhaps the bitterness with which the authors attack academics is due to the fact that towards the end of the Vietnam war it seemed many were beginning to gain some independence of judgement, only to slip back into apathy or worse once the military withdrawal was over.

Chomsky and Herman substantiate their charges by a detailed and thorough analysis of American press reporting and comment on the situation in Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea since 1975. All sections are impressive, but that on Kampuchea is the most thorough and valuable. Moreover, it includes a penetrating and fair-minded discussion of the relevant books: the shallow *Readers Digest* propaganda volume, *Murder of a Gentle Land*, by Barron and Paul; the more serious but more seriously faulted *Cambodia: year zero*, by François Ponchaud; and the review of the French original edition of that book by Lacoutre, whose exaggerations of some of Ponchaud's statements provided the material for countless wild American and later Vietnamese

denunciations of the Khmer Rouge.

But the media sins of omission are as grave as those of commission. All views contrary to the chosen one are either suppressed or distorted. The serious and invaluable account of Kampuchea by Hildebrand and Porter, *Cambodia, Starvation and Revolution*, was ignored in the United States and elsewhere because it gave a rather favourable account of the Khmer Rouge programme. Similarly, the testimonies of Scandinavian and Yugoslav diplomats and others who visited Kampuchea between 1975 and the end of 1978 were either ignored, or twisted so as to give a quite contrary impression to the favourable one that they had tried to convey.

It would be possible to finish *After the Cataclysm* in a despairing mood. How can people learn the truth while so constantly battered by malicious propaganda in this way? But in the long run, is it not the voices who dared to speak out despite the barrage and against it which really count?

Ripon, Yorks. ARTHUR CLEGG

*The National Front*

By NIGEL FIELDING (London, Boston and Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981). 247pp. Cloth £12.50.

It now appears to be more or less compulsory for authors of books called *The National Front* to commence their work with the claim that the NF is not a fascist organisation. In his cheap paperback of that title, Martin Walker stated that he could not find it in his 'heart or conscience' to call the NF fascist (on the grounds that, having met them, he found them such nice fellows), and in his expensive hardback Nigel Fielding states that he does not wish 'to present the NF as a Nazi or fascist group', again on the basis of the way the party's members see themselves (as part of 'a modern movement enshrining traditional British values'). In both cases, too, these authors spend most of their time trying (and failing) to substantiate the assertion that a group of people who have been involved in openly fascist parties in the past, and who, despite a conscious and deliberate attempt to disguise themselves as respectable people, still hold to all the essential ideological and practical tenets of fascist ideology, aren't really fascists at all.

Unlike Walker, Fielding writes much of his book in that strange, alien language in which sociologist likes to speak unto sociologist ('I decided that a substantial measure of interaction with members would be sought, and that I would undertake the practice of participant observation techniques' – meaning, that he went to some NF meetings and talked to people afterwards). Even when he is not speaking of 'the

immanent meanings of cultural objectifications' and 'a plurality of sub-universes of meaning' (not to mention 'the aetiology of political deviance'), it is often difficult to see what Fielding is driving at. Not wishing to present the NF as 'a Nazi or Fascist group', he defines Nazism (somewhat over-specifically) in terms of the German NSDAP's hostility to the 'cosmopolitanism' of the city, its attachment to mythic 'volkish' values, and its authoritarianism, a definition set against the NF's view of itself as a modern, British party. But then (nearly 200 pages later), Fielding informs us that 'the NF can be seen as anti-modern' and that it 'has more in common with the German variant of fascism than with the mid-Victorian age'. En route we have been reminded of Tyndall's liking for getting out of cities and sitting round campfires singing songs and drinking ale, and we have had quoted to us Richard Verrall's famous January 1976 article in which he cites Hitler's advocacy of 'the aristocratic principle in nature'. Fielding does not tell us that the phrase comes from *Mein Kampf*; but he has to admit that 'the essence of the NF ideology is incompatible with democracy'.

This technique of making a statement and then proceeding to undermine it over the following pages (albeit in a rather half-hearted way) occurs throughout the book. Take the following passage about John Tyndall:

> In terms of his prior political allegiances, Tyndall's views have moderated remarkably. Yet it must be noted that his consistent effort has been to preserve and defend in NF ideology those traits which were the hallmark of the early Nazi movements of which he was a part. He was, and is, the champion of the leadership principle, of an undeviating immigrant repatriation policy, and of an international financial conspiracy theory.

So where is this 'remarkable moderation'? Where, for that matter, is any reference to Tyndall's notorious 'Pierce Letter' in which he outlined, in a letter to an American Nazi written just after the Front's formation, his considered and deliberate plan 'to modify the form of our propaganda, though not of course the essence of the ideology', because of the manifest failure of groups 'with an openly Nazi label' in Britain? Similarly, when describing the NF's thoroughly traditional and British belief that Hitler's massacre of the Jews was 'a tall story' and 'a load of old rubbish' (*Spearhead*, April 1978), Fielding's selection of quotations betrays a strange reluctance to acknowledge that the Front do hold these extraordinary views. All he produces is a letter to *Spearhead* which suggests that 'about two million Jews died in camps' and that some writers 'have questioned even those figures'. Well, the NF don't question the two million figure, they resolutely deny it ('a load of old rubbish', as above; elsewhere, 'a tissue of lies ... manufactured from

persistent propaganda of the World Jewish Congress'). Similarly, Fielding does address himself to the idea that the notorious pamphlet *Did Six Million Really Die?* (of which he manages to quote the least noxious sentence) might have had something to do with the National Front, by referring to a *Socialist Worker* report that the publisher's address was a forwarding address for an NF member. Less tortuous proof of the identity of the author was provided on television three years before Fielding submitted his manuscript: Granada's *World in Action* demonstrated, with the aid of a handwriting expert, that the fictional author of the pamphlet had the same signature as Richard Verrall, editor of the NF's journal *Spearhead*.

But Fielding gets into his most intractable twist on the question of the NF's belief that 'there is a Jewish conspiracy for World Power ... and anti-semitism as a doctrine is no more than a natural gentile reaction to this fact' (*Spearhead*, March 1976). Fielding quotes some of this article by John Tyndall, but still insists that 'it cannot be categorically stated that the whole NF is anti-semitic', even though 'the literature displays considerable suspicion and prejudice'(!). He finds the NF's proscription of the National Democratic Freedom Movement on account of its anti-semitism 'more convincing' proof of the genuineness of the NF's insistence 'that it is not anti-semitic'; he does not point out that the NF have never proscribed the openly-Nazi British Movement, nor the fact that NF proscriptions (such as the one against the equally Nazi League of St George) tend to be honoured more in the breach than the observance. Finally, Fielding quotes the refreshingly unambiguous statement of a Front leader that 'we believe in an international conspiracy of the financial power, the Jews, which manipulates both communism and capitalism'; while stating *on the same page* that it is 'difficult to distinguish in the NF's analysis who is the supreme power in the conspiracy'.

Like Martin Walker before him, Fielding tends to accept the NF's own definitions of itself. The dissident faction in the 1975 NF split is resolutely described as 'populist', and the conflict is reduced to 'a clash of personality'. In fact, the split was an ideological conflict between 'left-wing' Nazis (owing stated allegiance to the similar 'Strasserite' tendency of the German Nazi Party, wiped out in the Night of the Long Knives) and the straight Hitlerites of the leadership. This fact became clear for all except Walker and Fielding to see when Richard Verrall wrote a long article about it in January 1976, an article which Fielding has read, because elsewhere he quotes from it, but clearly not understood.

And there are also occasions when Fielding gets things just plain wrong. He states, for example, that the conspiracy theory of the American extreme right 'clearly identifies the force behind all major and minor conspiracies as the Communists'. In fact, even leaving the

straight Nazi Right out of the issue, the leading American extreme right group (the John Birch Society) has believed since the mid-1960s (fifteen years before Fielding delivered his tome to the printers) that communism is 'a movement created, manipulated and used by power-seeking billionaires', merely 'an arm of a bigger conspiracy run from New York, London and Paris'. *That* quotation is from a book by the Birch Society's chief ideologue Gary Allen. Again, Fielding has read the book (he quotes from it elsewhere), but again he appears not to have read it very well.

And what are we to make of Fielding's remark that 'the NF accuses the Conservative Party of selling out "its economic policies", policies such as laissez-faire enterprise, which it has long since abandoned'? The syntax is not clear (which group has abandoned what?), but if Fielding means that the NF support laissez-faire economics, he is completely wrong; and if he thinks that the Tories have 'abandoned' such policies, it is hard to know where he's been living for the past five years.

In addition to the mistakes, there are extraordinary omissions. In a sociological study of British racialism, based on 'participant observation techniques', there is no mention of British imperialism. Again, in a work of sociology, there is no mention of the considerable research now available indicating that, while the NF clearly gains most of its votes in Labour constituencies, it tends to do well in Tory wards of those constituencies, and among ex-Tory rather than ex-Labour voters. In the chapter on the NF's attitude to the permissive society, there is no analysis of the party's *volkish* attitude to women; nowhere is there any detailed analysis of the NF's attacks on the whole concept of democratic government, its call for ten-year parliaments, its ambiguity about the whole idea of the popular veto.

And finally, Fielding falls victim – from time to time – to what one might call 'Walker's Syndrome', a malady of which the symptoms are an over-hasty association of the vehemence of a belief with its veracity. On one occasion, for instance, he states that 'the NF is probably right that "explanations" of high crime rates among immigrants are inadequate', again on the same page on which he has just disproved the assertion that the immigrant population is unusually prone to crime. The same symptoms appear in a short paragraph on the crisis that erupted in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1974: 'In Boston, the bussing of pupils to achieve racial balance effectively meant the exchange of pupils between poor black areas and working class Irish Catholics.' (It didn't; hardly any white pupils were bussed into black schools). 'The 1974 school year saw the eruption of major rioting between the groups ....' (It didn't; it saw the eruption of major rioting by whites in South and East Boston against black schoolchildren). 'In this instance there were obvious grounds for violence.' (Really?)

There is a need for a good, well-researched volume bringing together the masses of sociological, political and psephological research that has been done about the National Front in the last ten years. It was more the pity that Martin Walker's *The National Front* was so sloppy. It is doubly sad that Fielding's *The National Front* is no better.

Birmingham DAVID EDGAR

*Labour and Racism*

By ANNIE PHIZACKLEA and ROBERT MILES (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980). 248pp. £5.95 cloth.

Phizacklea and Miles wish to break with the 'race relations' formula for studying black people in Britain by examining black migrant labour as 'the racialised fraction of the working class' and its position in 'the British political process'. They believe that their framework acknowledges that blacks have simultaneously 'both a class position vis-à-vis capital and a distinct position within the working class'. And from their study they conclude that 'continuity in beliefs and action between ... English and West Indian respondents is more common than discontinuity', although 'continuities may coexist with certain discontinuities which express different interests within the class'. And, surprise, 'racism clearly does not structure *all* situations for the majority of our [sic] West Indians'.

It is not enough to write off this book as mere trite academic nonsense. Its content is misleading if not reactionary. And, because of its authors' pretentions to marxism, this book is finding its way on to radical bookstalls at left-wing conferences. First, there is nothing marxist about their method. They took a questionnaire around West Indian and white workers and residents of Brent to ascertain their class consciousness, their racial consciousness (something they separate) and their political participation. They then tried to fit their findings around a model of political action based on the dominant 'ethnic' interpretation of race relations. Political action is categorised into 'class unity', 'ethnic organisation' or 'black unity' – and 'black unity' is said to exist when two or more ethnic groups take part in joint activity at the workplace.

But because the authors do not find 'black unity' in real life (because they are not looking for it?), they write it off as unlikely. 'Despite their common position as a racially excluded class fraction, migrant workers from the Caribbean and from the Indian sub-continent are unlikely to organise together on any significant scale ... situational exceptions being noted.' 'Ethnic organisation', on the other hand, is an observable activity and ranges from such things as a strike at Imperial Typewriters, 'ethnically-based revolutionary' parties and responses to

'racial exclusion' in the 'informal sphere of politics', to 'the development of West Indian identity' as a result of 'racism and discrimination'.

Phizacklea and Miles are unable to move beyond the empirical to the analytical. What they observe is the colour of the actors not the colour of the act. Hence they confuse what may be the vehicle of struggle, 'ethnicity', for the determinant of struggle, racism. And they fail to ask two crucial questions. Why have there been no West Indian strikes as such, and why has 'black unity' not taken place on the factory floor? The answer to both these questions is that though West Indians and Asians occupy a 'common position as a racially excluded class fraction', that position is not an *identical* one. Although both Asians and West Indians were exploited by the colonial capitalist system, they were exploited differentially; and their location in different parts of the labour process in Britain has been determined by the specifics of that exploitation. Whilst West Indians were recruited into mainstream service occupations, Asians were recruited into old, often undercapitalised industries, in a particular process and often on an 'ethnic' shift. Because of the nature of the service industries West Indians were by and large incorporated into trade unions as a matter of course; and even if they were placed below white workers in the hierarchy, they did work alongside them (which would better explain the authors' finding that West Indians' beliefs in the unions, etc., are similar to those of their white counterparts). Asians, on the other hand, were separated from the main workforce in the factory – in worse conditions and possibly on different machinery from their white colleagues. Hence it was that Asian workers were forced into 'ethnic' strikes – not because they were intrinsically 'ethnics' but because they were ethnically segregated at the workplace.

What is more important, however, is that the authors, having failed to find 'black unity' on the factory floor did not – because of their white yardsticks for judging struggle – look for it in the community. And it is precisely here that West Indians do organise. And it is also in community-based fights against state racism and white racialism that West Indians and Asians come together. To reduce this arena of 'black unity' to 'situational exceptions' or 'rare contexts' is to distort black reality and the style and context of black struggle.

Going on that same ethnocentric yardstick, the authors maintain that 'it is necessary at all stages of analysis to compare the political action of black workers with that of indigenous workers', and this in turn necessitates collecting data about 'joining a trade union and participation in industrial action', for how else could they 'seriously consider the extent of class consciousness amongst black workers'? Nowhere is there an understanding of the struggles that black people have waged against colonialism and slavery and the tradition they bring from those

struggles into the metropolitan situation. Hence there is no appreciation that such struggles, being essentially political, have something to contribute to the working-class struggle as a whole. Nor is there an understanding that in the metropolitan situation – which imposes a racial consciousness ahead of class consciousness on black people – racial consciousness could be a path to class consciousness. For, as Sivanandan has pointed out, it is a burden of the black condition that 'inside every black man, there is a working-class man waiting to get out'. To be oppressed in one's race in order to be exploited in one's class is an inescapable connection, a palpable experience that does not pass the black worker by.

For Phizacklea and Miles, on the contrary, the 'politics of race' is a minority preoccupation belonging to the young – the 'wageless', the 'hustlers' and the 'Rastas' – which does not find support within the 'majority of the West Indian working class who are law-abiding and pursue stable employment'. They even go so far as to suggest that if something is not done to prevent it, racial consciousness might spread amongst black people until it poses as great a threat to society as does white racism. One of the oldest racist clichés – that black power = white power – is the bullshit on which the book closes.

Institute of Race Relations JENNY BOURNE

*Mugging as a Social Problem*

By Dr M. PRATT (London, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1980). 236pp. £11.95

This is a dangerous book. Pratt, a senior civilian employee at Scotland Yard for the past twenty years, wrote it with the 'full approval of the Assistant Commissioner (Crime)'. Hence he had full access to official Metropolitan Police figures and records. And additional credibility is lent to his conclusions by his liberal recourse to British and American sociological treatises – for Pratt wrote the book while on a sabbatical at Birkbeck College and was duly awarded a PhD. The book is dangerous because these factors give authenticity to the popular notion of 'mugging' as a 'black crime', a notion on which racism flourishes. Pratt's conclusions, despite his arduous attempts to present them as 'objective', are that 'there can be little dispute then that, in absolute terms, robbery must be classed as predominantly a "black crime" ', and that the 'mugger' will be 'under the age of twenty-one, and more often than not he will be black'.

When the book was launched last year, Pratt's publishers announced that he would be attending the press conference, but he was ordered not to by his superiors at Scotland Yard. And the reason is apparent

from the book itself – for it reveals many of the Metropolitan Police's attitudes and practices vis-à-vis black people, for example, the use of a 'Race Code' on charge sheets since 1960. It is useful, therefore, to approach the book in two ways. First, to examine Pratt's thesis and secondly, to glean information on the police practices it reveals.

Pratt is quite open about why he chose to write about mugging. Intellectually it was because 'the academic thirst for investigation stimulates research into the phenomenon ... because of the inherent fascination of the subject'. More directly, because 'robbery in general and mugging in particular are ... serious crimes in the eyes both of the general public and those who enforce the law' – which translated means the media and the police. He was, besides, in an 'ideal position' to carry out the task as he had 'easy and unrestricted access to the raw data, notably the police Crime Report Sheets (Form 478)' on which charges are entered. And it was this access which was to lead him to conclude (several chapters later) that 'race is one of the most important considerations relating to the crime of mugging'.

Mugging, however, is not a crime. By Pratt's own admission 'mugging has no legal meaning at all and has entered the vocabulary of crime statistics purely as a result of popular usage. A person can be charged with robbery, but he certainly cannot be charged with mugging.' People caught 'mugging' are charged with robbery under Section 8(1) of the Theft Act 1968, which covers robbery with the actual or implied use of violence. Pratt has, therefore, to find some sociological justification for looking at the 'crime of mugging' and devotes many pages to this end. The real reason is much simpler.

In 1961 a study was completed by a well-known criminologist, F.H. McLintock, entitled 'Robbery in London'. In this study McLintock broke down robberies into five groups – the law at the time being confused and based on the Larceny Acts of 1861 and 1916. His system of classification was immediately adopted by the Metropolitan Police for the recording of crime in London. Group II in McLintock's system was defined as 'Robbery in the open following sudden attack'. So when the term mugging, which quickly attained racial connotations, 'came into general usage in this country in 1972, it soon became apparent that appropriate statistics would be required for this "new" type of crime'. The Metropolitan Police decided that of the five groups the 'one approximating most closely to what it was felt ... would normally be thought of as mugging, seemed to be Group II'. The actual classification of a charge is, of course, made at the discretion and, thus at the subjective view, of the officer completing the form, a factor compounded by the 'discretion' open to the police on the streets as to who to stop and who to arrest or whether to turn a 'blind eye' (a factor noted by Pratt himself). But in addition to the classification of mugging on the charge sheet as a Group II offence, the same form also in-

cludes the classification of offenders according to racial origin. According to Pratt, this practice started 'about 1960', the same time as the McLintock classification system was introduced, and was originally called the 'Race Code'. Because of 'touchiness regarding the question of race', this was later changed to 'Identity Codes', which is a breakdown of offenders into six racial groups (West Indians being IC3, the 'Negroid type').

Sociological justifications for the study of 'mugging' become irrelevant if the 'raw material' compiled by the Metropolitan Police since 1960 – despite previous denials that a 'Race Code' existed – was easily available to the author. The fact that 'mugging' had no basis in law was also clearly irrelevant because of widespread public concern with the problem, a problem almost exclusively defined by race.

Justification for the study becomes even harder as a result of Pratt's own evidence. It is certainly true that robbery and 'muggings' have risen in the last twenty years, but as he himself admits', 'even today mugging still forms a relatively small proportion of the total volume of crime'. For the year 1977 there were 3,771 muggings, out of a grand total of 569,000 indictable (serious) crimes recorded by the police in London. And if these so-called muggings were a cause for concern, what about the 3,429 cases recorded by the Metropolitan Police of assault, robbery and other violent theft on black people in London in the very same year? (*Hansard*, 31 October 1980. This latter figure had risen to 3,827 by 1979.)

Pratt takes a sample of a 1,010 cases of mugging, based on the forms returned by local police stations covering the whole of London over a four-year period. By this means he is able to show that 58 per cent of the assailants were black (in the IC3 category) and only 30 per cent white (IC1). However, later, in another chapter, figures are given which show that although 28 per cent of recorded robberies in London are committed by black people, white people are responsible for 68 per cent of all robberies, 70 per cent of all crimes of violence, 83 per cent of burglaries, 85 per cent of car-stealing and 78 per cent of all indictable crimes (not all the rest are committed by blacks – West Indians here – as some are committed by 'Orientals' or 'dark-skinned Europeans').

The numbers game, however, is not very productive. What is more interesting are the general trends indicated by Pratt's figures. The figures show that the major increase in 'black crime' came in the 1970s. This decade was one when the black community in London, already living in the most deprived areas of the city, faced growing unemployment (a long time before the white working class). Not only were these areas defined by the police themselves as 'high crime areas' which required the full employment of fire-brigade policing techniques, like the continued introduction of the Special Patrol Group, but black people in general and young black people in particular were seen by the police

on the streets as a 'criminal' class. Young black people became 'targets' for special attention and the rise in the numbers arrested, not just for 'mugging' but for 'sus' and other street offences, is hardly surprising.

The figures also tell us something about policing in London for the working class as a whole. Out of a total force of 23,000 police officers, it is estimated that only between 2-3,000 are actually on the streets at any one time – and that in a city of seven million people. The clear-up rate for robbery (including burglaries) is not only the lowest in the country, but has dropped from 21 per cent to 13 per cent of reported cases between 1974 and 1977. In 1975 the robbery clear-up rate in Lambeth was 17 per cent, while in Barnet and southern Hertfordshire it was 42 per cent, and the pattern continues throughout London – greater protection is given to middle-class communities than to working-class ones. Overall, although the population of London has dropped in the past twenty years, the number of robberies which have been reported to the police have risen from 671 to 6,826 (1977), equalling the number for the whole of the rest of the country. The lessons that can be drawn are twofold. The figures presented by Pratt support the argument for a separation of the role of policing London from the extensive national roles also carried out by Scotland Yard. More importantly, it is one indication of the development of policing policy in the 1970s. Unable to fulfil their ostensible role with any credibility, the police have adopted a policy of containment in the 'high crime areas', as they term them, in other words, the ghetto areas of London. And containment means swift, violent responses when trouble flares up. This approach is also reflected in the draconian powers requested by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, which are an admission that 'consent' is already being withheld by the ghettoised and hence extraordinary powers were needed by the police.

The chapter on 'Race' is where Pratt really reveals his hand. He goes to great pains to show causal links between being black and being criminal, and uses extensive extracts from the Metropolitan Police evidence to the Select Committee to make his point. In March 1976 the Metropolitan Police told the Committee: 'already our experience has taught us the fallibility of the assertion that crime rates amongst those of West Indian origin are no higher than those of the rest of the population'. The evidence goes on to say that London's black citizens, 'amongst whom those of West Indian origin predominate, are disproportionately involved in many forms of crime. But in view of their heavy concentration in areas of urban stress, which are themselves high crime areas, and in view of the disproportionate numbers of young people in the West Indian population, this pattern is not surprising.'

He acknowledges that discrimination takes place and that it is a 'serious misuse of scarce resources' if trained black teachers end up as 'railway guards'. But, when all is said and done, 'several studies' show that a 'high proportion of coloured immigrants had no intention of settling permanently' and, 'with the discovery that Britain was by no means the "land of milk and honey" they had confidently expected, it might well be imagined that they would be keener than ever to return to their homeland'. He suggests two reasons why they do not: that they cannot afford it and, more 'crucial', 'few immigrants would wish to go home virtually empty-handed'. So if they are not going to leave, what are the available solutions? The first, Pratt says, could be assimilation – the acceptance of white culture – but this could cause 'mental trauma' and attempts at physical changes 'such as hair straightening or even lightening of the skin'. Or they could accept second-class citizenship, but this is even more difficult because of the 'achievement aspirations [of] the second generation', which could instead develop into a 'largely defensive' West Indian 'consciousness'. For the black youth 'assimilation has proved almost impossible ... [and] acceptance of second-class citizenship is simply not an alternative. Only the development of a distinctive West Indian consciousness and, to an even greater extent, involvement in small-scale crime appear to offer any sort of solution to their problem'.

The equation is now complete: to be black is to be criminal, and especially, to be a young black is to be criminal. What are the reasons for this? Mugging is not an economic crime but a 'cultural option', one of 'style' or 'machismo'. The characteristics of the 'typical mugger of today', which are portrayed as being reminiscent of the Teds and Rockers of the 1950s and 1960s, fit 'the demonstrable individualism of the typical West Indian'. For the young West Indian 'mugging, with its inherent individualism', allows him to 'vent' his frustrations 'for which he blames a society dominated by the white man'.

Pratt's final solutions, like his evidence, veer from the absurd to the dangerous. Although he feels integration and the elimination of slums may be 'very worthwhile long-term aims', they certainly are not the answer to mugging. The solutions to that have to be more direct: people have to be educated by the police not to place themselves at risk by being in certain places at certain times; 'truancy sweeps' should be encouraged (although few muggings take place during school hours); anti-mugging squads should be set up (like the one in Lewisham in 1977); and more leisure facilities should be created, where no doubt, youth can act out their West Indian individualistic machismo playing ping-pong.

Pratt's final hope for a solution is that: 'The sheer passing of time could well mean a vastly improved integration of what is probably *the* most problematic group, the second-generation West Indian "im-

migrant'' ' (his emphasis). But if time has shown anything, it is that the problem is racism not the blacks. And racism itself is a white problem.

State Research TONY BUNYAN

*Bolivia: coup d'état*

LATIN AMERICA BUREAU Special Brief (London, LAB, 1980). 88pp. £1.50 paper. Available from LAB, PO Box 134, London NW1.

Perhaps the sign of a good pamphlet is one which keeps you musing on its content but wanting more. At first glance, the Latin America Bureau's 88-page attempt to analyse the balance of forces in Bolivian society, the history of class struggle and military repression, all in the context of imperialism, should by its very brevity be doomed to failure. But, despite the odd simplification and omission, it works well.

'Since independence, Bolivia's tiny capitalist class has been unable to create a social base for parliamentary democracy in the manner of the bourgeoisies of Western Europe.' As a result, the pamphlet states, Bolivia's history has been that of the military defending its own, landowners' and mining interests against all comers, and especially against their 'ancestral enemy' – the organised working class.

To compensate for its brevity, the pamphlet presents a statistical outline and a chronology plus a brief description of the political parties, trade unions and armed forces. It then traces the origins of the significant 1980 coup back to the nationalist revolution of 1952, which began a series of agrarian and economic reforms as a result of working-class and peasant pressure. The military backlash of succeeding years is clearly explained, as is the complex set of events which led to the 'democratic experiment'. This lasted from 1978 until 1980, when it was finally crushed.

The pamphlet is at its strongest in demonstrating the absurdity of 'democratic' elections in today's Latin America, where the military constitutes the basis of state power. It shows how the European-style political parties fragmented and proved incapable of winning elections and then taking state power; while the organised working class, relying predominantly on its union structure, lacked a unified political arm. The end result has been that the way was open for brutal military repression to wipe out all forms of organised opposition.

In short, a publication useful for anyone interested in general questions of military power in Latin America or specific facts and figures about Bolivia's social history.

London JANE McINTOSH

# Books received

*This listing does not preclude subsequent publication of reviews*

*Administration in Zambia.* Edited by William Tordoff. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1980. Cloth £22.50.

*Ancient slavery and modern ideology.* By M.I. Finley. London, Chatto & Windus, 1980. Cloth £8.50.

*The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires 1800-1900.* By George Reid Andrews. Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1980. Cloth $21.50.

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