

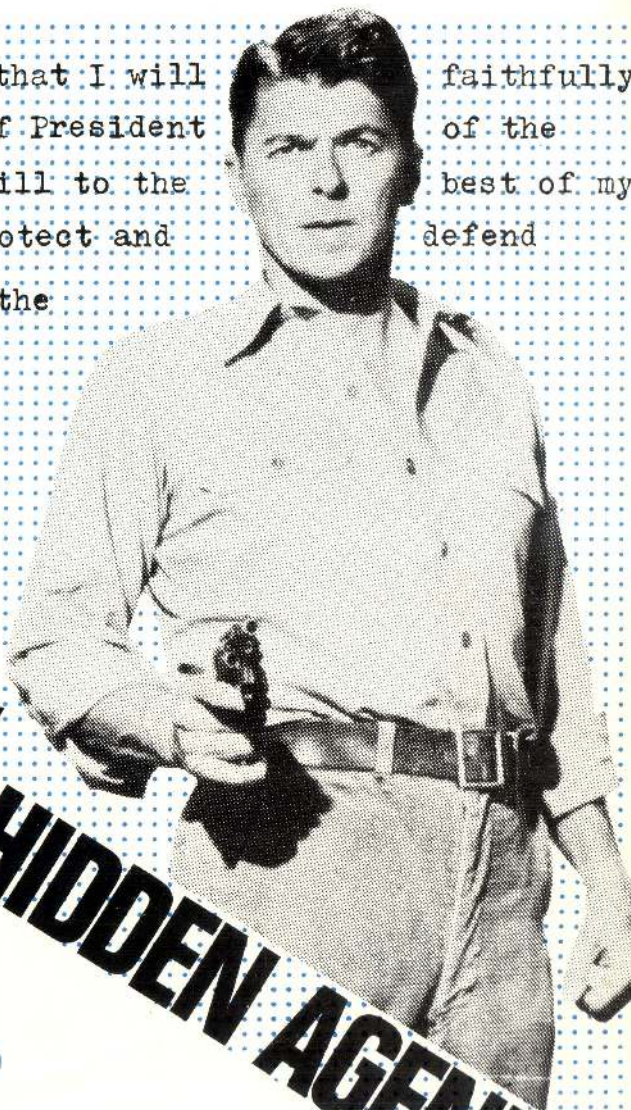
# RACE & CLASS

A JOURNAL  
FOR BLACK AND  
THIRD WORLD  
LIBERATION

VOLUME XXII  
WINTER 1981  
NUMBER 3

"I do solemnly swear that I will  
execute the office of President  
United States, and will to the  
ability preserve, protect and  
the Constitution of the  
United States."

faithfully  
of the  
best of my  
defend



by David Edgar

## REAGAN'S HIDDEN AGENDA

Pakistan's state formation

The Eritrean revolution

The crisis in Turkey

Race, class and caste in South Africa

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DAVID EDGAR

## Reagan's hidden agenda: racism and the new American right

The struggle for black rights in America was the first and defining political struggle of the 1960s. If the decade can be said to have had a starting point, it was in Greensboro, North Carolina, on 1 February 1960, when four black students were refused a cup of coffee in a local Woolworths. The first major movement of the 1960s was the black Civil Rights Movement. The right to campaign for that movement on campus was the issue of the first major student uprising, at the University of California at Berkeley, in 1964. In later years, no student struggle lacked the dimension of a struggle for black autonomy and self-determination in the universities. And the fight against the Vietnam War became in large part a struggle to stop black people being sent by white people to kill yellow people.

Even the movements of sexual liberation that emerged in the very late 1960s and the early 1970s defined themselves in language developed by the Black Movement, the first to create a vocabulary to describe and counter the oppression of groups not solely defined by class. Without Black Brotherhood, there would have been no Sisterhood; without Black Power and Black Pride there would have been no Gay Power and Gay Pride. The movement against the abuse of the powers of the state (culminating in Watergate) derived much of its strength and purpose from the exposure of the FBI's surveillance and

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harassment of the Black Panthers and the Black Muslims. Of the great movements of the 1960s, only the Environmental Movement did not have the Black Movement as a central organisational fact or as a defining political metaphor and inspiration.

If the election of the small-town nice-guy Jimmy Carter was a desperate reaction against the Washington team that brought you Vietnam and Watergate, a kind of uneasy, Christmas armistice in the generation/class/sex/race-war, then Ronald Reagan's victory is a delayed treaty of Versailles. Reagan is the backlash. But, as many British commentators have now pointed out, he is not alone. Behind him stand a myriad of right-wing organisations, movements and tendencies which have been working and building during the 1970s, in part within the Republican Party, but also with the aim of building a conservative majority independent of party. It has been generally – though often separately – agreed that the two most significant, identifiable tendencies are, on the one hand, a group of Eastern, academic intellectuals who have accepted the label 'Neo-Conservative'; and, on the other, a network of conservative organisations who share sophisticated methods of propaganda and fundraising, and who have been collectively (if unimaginatively) dubbed 'the New Right'.

In a now quite famous article in *Esquire* magazine,<sup>1</sup> Neo-Conservatism was defined as a movement, by and large, of second-generation Jewish or Irish Americans, who were brought up in poverty in New York City in the 1930s (and became committed at university to various brands of non-communist socialist doctrine, particularly Trotskyism), had moved to a Cold War liberal position by the early 1950s, supported (and, in many cases, contributed to) the development of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programme in the 1960s, but have, in the 1970s moved much further to the right, to a point where most (if not all) are happy to be described as conservatives, neo or otherwise.

The key figures are Seymour Martin Lipset, Samuel P. Huntington, Robert Nisbet, Daniel Bell, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, James Q. Wilson, Nathan Glazer and Irving Kristol. Their political representatives are Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Henry Jackson. Their most-favoured organisation is the American Enterprise Institute. Their organs are *Commentary* magazine (edited by Podhoretz) and the *Public Interest* (founded by Kristol and Bell, and now edited by Kristol and Glazer).

The Neo-Conservatives have been significant to the Republican victory in two ways. Firstly (unlike most Neo-Conservatives), Irving Kristol – dubbed by *Esquire* as the 'Godfather' of the movement – is a Republican, and served on the Reagan campaign's Policy Council. And second, the defection of these sophisticated, cosmopolitan Easterners from liberalism has provided a vital intellectual endorsement for Reagan's Western 'cowboy' conservatism.



But if the Neo-Conservatives have provided much of the intellectual legitimacy of the Reagan counter-revolution, the legwork has been done by the New Right,\* a network of organisations founded in 1974-5 to campaign within Congress and at the grassroots for conservative causes. The key New Right organisations and leaders are the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (Paul Weyrich), the National Conservative Political Action Committee (John Dolan) and the Conservative Caucus (Howard Phillips). Their journal is the *Conservative Digest*, which is published by Richard Viguerie, whose technique of direct-mail fundraising (he has the names and addresses of an estimated ten million American conservatives on twenty-five computerised lists) has been the key organisational factor in the growth of the New Right. The New Right also has its own think tank, the Heritage Foundation,\*\* which publishes the quarterly *Policy Review*. This has become the main link between the Neo-Conservatives and the New Right. *Policy Review* is not the only New Right institution to engage in impressive political linkage, however: in the summer of 1978, the Conservative Caucus managed to weld itself together with a number of fundamentalist Protestant groups into two umbrella organisations – the Moral Majority and Christian Voice – that, together with the anti-abortion Right to Life Movement, can claim responsibility for some of the Reagan policy platform, and the political scalps of ‘targetted’ liberal Senators Frank Church, Birch Bayh and George McGovern in the November elections.

The Neo-Conservatives and the New Right are, of course, many miles apart in style, technique, income, class, geographical location and political heritage. They are, however, much closer ideologically than has been supposed. Since 1945, American conservatism has been more than usually riven by the conflict between right-wing libertarians (the tendency of which F.A. Hayek, Ludwig von Mises and Milton Friedman are the gurus), and a much more collectivist, Tory paternalism, most elegantly popularised by William F. Buckley of the *National Review*. What is interesting about the Neo-Conservatives and the New Right is that both movements tend towards the latter, the traditionalist end of the conservative spectrum.

It is, indeed, one of Irving Kristol’s most consistent projects ‘to question the validity of the original liberal idea that it is possible for the individual, alone or in private voluntary association with others, to cope with the eternal dilemmas of the human condition’.<sup>4</sup> For Kristol,

\*The ‘newness’ of the New Right is questionable; in fact, most of its leaders cut their teeth in the Young Americans for Freedom in the 1960s, and many have had or still have connections with the rabidly reactionary John Birch Society.<sup>2</sup>

\*\*Founded by Peter Weyrich in 1974, the Heritage Foundation was funded by wealthy Colorado brewer Joseph Coors, who has also contributed funds to the John Birch Society.<sup>3</sup>



'the moral authority of tradition, and some public support for this authority, seems to be needed', acknowledging that 'this is, beyond all doubt, an authentically "conservative" thought, a pre-capitalist thought'. And this thought has led Kristol, in particular, to challenge F.A. Hayek's thesis that 'in a free society it is neither desirable nor practicable that material rewards should be made generally to correspond to what men recognise as merit'.<sup>5</sup> Hayek's view, for Kristol, is 'ultimately subversive of the social order', because men (and presumably women) 'cannot for long accept a society in which power, privilege and property are not distributed according to some morally meaningful criteria'.<sup>6</sup> The people do not, in other words, yearn for the bracing winds of competitive individualism; they yearn for a sense of shared moral values, and 'for order and stability'.<sup>7</sup>

It was, of course, the events of the 1960s that led the Neo-Conservatives to this point of view. In his recent book on Neo-Conservatism, Peter Steinfels points out that the 'most enduring legacy to American politics may be the outlook forged in reaction to 60s' turbulence, ... committed to stability as a prerequisite for justice rather than the other way round'.<sup>8</sup> In the Bicentennial (Fall 1975) edition of Kristol and Glazer's journal, the *Public Interest*, Samuel P. Huntington summed up the Neo-Conservative view of the 1960s as a decade when 'people no longer felt the same obligation to obey those whom they had previously considered superior to themselves in age, rank, status, expertise, character or talents', concluding that the United States was suffering from an 'excess of democracy'. In the face of this, as Steinfels points out, 'Neo-Conservatism insists that authority must be reasserted and the government protected'.<sup>9</sup>

The New Right is perhaps even more associated with authoritarian, social issues as against (and at the expense of) the economic arguments of the market. In an article in *The Nation* (29 January 1977), Alan Crawford (a former Young American for Freedom) attacked the New Right for its economic revisionism, asserting that the New Right would 'support middle-class welfare and further government intervention in the economy, as long as such practices were favoured by the "New Majority" constituency'. This is a view acknowledged, in part, by the New Right themselves: its journal, *Conservative Digest*, admits that 'the New Right is looking for issues that people care about, and social issues, at least for the present, fit the bill'.<sup>10</sup> In the same article, Paul Weyrich confesses that 'gun control, abortion, taxes and crime' are indeed emotional issues, 'but it's better than talking about capital formation'. And, finally, there is William Rusher, a central figure on the American right (a veteran of the Goldwater campaign, he has been the publisher of William F. Buckley's *National Review* for twenty years, and is now actively involved in the Conservative Caucus). Rusher's 1975 book on *The Making of the New Majority Party* presents a

strategy for uniting Republican and Democratic conservatives in a new coalition, and he acknowledges that this would require a watering down of the purity of the market economy: 'In domestic affairs, the central objective ... must be to reconcile the prescriptions of traditional economic conservatism with the necessities of blue collar America.'<sup>11</sup> And, indeed, such a compromise might be no bad thing: for 'social conservatism' might well 'serve to moderate the near-puritan severity of traditional conservative economics'.<sup>12</sup>

\* \* \*

It is generally agreed by most commentators on the left that the politics of both Neo-Conservatism and the New Right are defined by a concern with social rather than economic issues. There has been a considerable debate, however, about any more precise definition of the nature of the conservative backlash. However, one prominent, and recently dominant argument on the left has been that the defining project of the new conservatism is the reassertion of patriarchy, and a rolling-back of the gains of the Women's and Gay Rights movements.

Thus Allen Hunter and Linda Gordon, writing in *Radical America*,<sup>13</sup> argue that 'anti-feminism is now propelling a strong and growing New Right', a development which is 'not only a backlash against women's and gay liberation movements', but also 'a reassertion of patriarchal forms of family structure and male dominance'. Hunter and Gordon do not claim that the other issues have gone away: 'Racism has not diminished as a political force, but has been joined – and the whole right-wing thereby strengthened – by a series of conservative campaigns defending the family, a restrictive and hypocritical sexual morality, and male dominance.' Until recently, 'it seemed that racism, especially anti-busing, was the heart of the conservative backlash'. Now, however, it is possible to interpret even the campaign against busing as primarily an issue of the family: 'The loss of neighbourhood schools is perceived as a threat to community, and therefore family stability ... fears for children's safety and objections to the inaccessibility of their schools and teachers reflect both family love and parental desire for control.'<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Andrew Kopkind of the *Village Voice*, writing in *New Times* in 1977,<sup>15</sup> argues that 'what is new about the New Right is its generation in the "pro-family" issues', and among those who find that 'homosexuals, abortionists and liberated women make perfect targets of convenience for baffled and misled traditionalists'.

It is easy to find evidence for this view. On the Neo-Conservative side, there is a constant harping on the community and the family's place in it, and it is on sexual questions that the inherent authoritarianism of the movement often manifests itself. The only



leading woman Neo-Conservative, Midge Dector, is best known for her book *The New Chastity and Other Arguments Against Women's Liberation*, and her husband Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* magazine, is noted for his apoplectic attitude towards homosexuals. In both of his two bites at the autobiographical cherry (*Making It*, published in 1967, and *Breaking Ranks*, 1979), Podhoretz spends much time fulminating against 'the male self-hatred pervading the gay rights campaign', a 'plague' that attacks 'the vital organs of the entire species, preventing men from fathering children and women from mothering them'.<sup>16</sup> Podhoretz has also been known to give his prejudices a more directly political emphasis: in a 1977 article, he alleged that pacifism in England between the wars, and in America in the 1960s, was to be accounted for by the influence in public life of homosexuals.<sup>17</sup>

And, as stated, the New Right has gained a lot of its recent strength and muscle from pro-family issues. As Alan Crawford pointed out in his recent book:

While the men of the New Right symbolically guard the frontier from external threats, exercising their energies on *macho* issues like gun ownership, national defence, law and order and 'free market' economics, the women – with some help from sympathetic male politicians and preachers – protect hearth and home from threats to their way of life ...<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \*

It is my contention, however, that this perspective grossly underestimates the crucial importance of race as a *defining* issue both for the New Right and for Neo-Conservatism. Despite the frequent claims that 'the overt racism of the past has gone',<sup>19</sup> the aim to roll back the gains of the Black Movement since 1960 remains a central determinant of the style, identity and political practice of the new conservatism.

The first point is historical. Hunter and Gordon acknowledge that the first outbreak of populist reaction against the progressive gains of the 1960s was the campaign against school busing in Boston in 1974. As Coretta King pointed out, and the involvement of the Ku Klux Klan in the Boston events confirmed, the conduct of the anti-busing campaign 'has made the issue one of racism in its broadest forms'.<sup>20</sup> And Boston was by no means the only American city in which racism in this form became and has remained a dominant political question. The controversy spread to Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Kansas and, especially, California, where school desegregation became the subject of political campaigns and referenda. And, in Boston itself, as the *New York*



*Times* pointed out, 'racial tensions ... have repeatedly boiled over into violence and turmoil ... throughout the 1970s'.<sup>23</sup> It is true that anti-busing leaders in Boston, like Louise Day Hicks, have extended their agitation into the realm of the family – in April 1975, for example, supporters of the anti-busing organisation ROAR broke up a meeting in support of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution with cries of 'We like men' and 'Abortion is murder'.<sup>22</sup> But racism was the cement that initially bound the New Right in Boston together, and led to an astonishing rightward shift in Massachusetts, culminating in the surprise election of right-wing Democrat Edward King as Governor in 1978, and reflected in the fact that the only state to vote McGovern in 1972 defected to Reagan in 1980.

The violence that has marked the backlash of the 1970s – in the South (for example, the murder of five left-wing demonstrators in North Carolina in November 1979)\* is, of course, a reflection of a history that goes back way beyond the riots of the late 1960s. The politics of one of the three senior branches of the United States government – the Supreme Court – have been defined by the race question ever since the Warren Court ruled against school segregation in the South in 1954. Much of the Court's most controversial rulings in the 1970s, too, has concerned Northern busing and affirmative action; in particular, the case of Allen Bakke (a white student who challenged the constitutionality of an affirmative selection policy at the University of California at Davis) and Brian Weber (the 'blue-collar Bakke', an aluminium worker in Louisiana who claimed he had been discriminated against by his company's affirmative promotion programme).

It is not surprising, therefore, that in common with others concerned with social policy, the leading Neo-Conservatives have spent a considerable time writing and thinking about race. For Patrick Moynihan it has proved a career, from his so-called 'Moynihan Report' on 'the weakness of Negro family life'<sup>23</sup> in 1965 (Moynihan was then working as an aide to the Johnson administration) to his notorious memorandum to President Nixon proposing a policy of 'benign neglect' towards the ghettos. And, more recently, Moynihan has devoted much of his considerable polemical energies to at first advocating and then defecting from the concept of the guaranteed minimum income as a solution to the perceived problems of black families.

It is certainly significant that Moynihan chose to announce his disillusion with this idea in a letter to William F. Buckley's *National Review*.<sup>24</sup> As Christopher Jencks has pointed out, Moynihan's analysis has always been in the conservative tradition – 'the guiding assumption is that social pathology is caused less by logical defects in the social system than by defects in particular individuals and groups' – and Moynihan's prescription, therefore, is to 'change the deviants not the

---

\*Two weeks after Reagan's election, the accused were acquitted by an all-white jury.

system'.<sup>25</sup> Increasingly, however, he has expressed this view in belligerent terms, claiming, in the late 1960s, that 'the issue at hand is a recognisable problem of lower class behaviour ... Not much good and very likely some harm is done by turning directly to the subject of white guilt.'<sup>26</sup> By the late 1970s, he is asserting that an affirmative action programme for New York teachers recalled 'the sorting out of human beings for the death camps'.<sup>27</sup>

Moynihan has collaborated with his fellow Neo-Conservative Nathan Glazer on two books, *Ethnicity* and *Beyond the Melting Pot*, and Glazer is well known for his solo attack, in 1975, on the whole idea of affirmative action. Questions of race have also dominated the writings of Neo-Conservatives for whom it is not a specific area of expertise. In his brace of autobiographies, Norman Podhoretz charts 'the whole story of how and why I went from being a liberal to a radical and then finally to being an enemy of radicalism in all its forms'.<sup>28</sup> It is, in fact, not at all clear what was ever particularly radical about Podhoretz's unexceptional wish to grant 'to every individual his own fulness of being, and to the society as a whole vitality and a sense of common purpose'.<sup>29</sup> What is made crystal clear, however, is why Podhoretz moved. Having commissioned James Baldwin to write the article for *Commentary* that eventually became *The Fire Next Time* (the fact that Baldwin eventually sold it to the *New Yorker* rankled sufficiently for Podhoretz to include this fact in both autobiographies), he penned and published his own article – titled *My Negro Problem – and Ours* – which he later summarised as follows:

Liberals thought of Negroes as persecuted and oppressed, but the stories I told were all stories of how I and other white children had been persecuted and oppressed by the Negro children among whom we lived and with whom we went to school: how we had been repeatedly beaten up, robbed, and in general hated, terrorized and humiliated ... I said that my own experience had convinced me that living together only exacerbates the hatred that existed.<sup>30</sup>

Rejecting, then, the possibility of integration, Podhoretz concluded that 'some day, perhaps, the Negroes would disappear through wholesale miscegenation into the white population; it would be the best conclusion to the whole sorry story, if only it ever could happen'.<sup>31</sup> And when he wrote this, Podhoretz assures us, 'I still considered myself a member, and even in some senses a leader, of the radical movement.' With radicalism like this, one is tempted to ask, who needs reaction? But in *Breaking Ranks* Podhoretz provides it, fulminating against 'all the white liberals who permit Negroes to blackmail them into adopting a double standard of moral judgement, and who lend themselves ... to cunning and contemptuous exploitation by Negroes they employ [!] or try to defend'.<sup>32</sup>



\* \* \*

The leaders of the New Right have not been so deeply concerned, professionally or ideologically, with the question of race as such. (Although Richard Viguerie, whose first major fundraising triumph was the raising of six million dollars for George Wallace's presidential campaign, was clearly not unacquainted with the politics of racism.) One characteristic of the New Right has been, indeed, to draw on every conceivable available grievance, and to unite the myriad interest groups concerned with their redress. The following flyer from the Conservative Caucus (circulated in April 1977) gives a fairly representative list of then current New Right issues, of which, it will be noted, race (in the form of busing) is but one:

Do you agree with millions of other Americans that:

- Workers should be given the freedom to choose whether or not to join a union?
- Inflation and Unemployment are, in large part, the result of reckless government spending and massive deficits?
- It is wrong for the Federal Government to subsidize cities like New York, so wastefully managed that they can't pay their bills?
- Taking guns away from law-abiding citizens won't control crime, but punishing criminals will?
- We are being taxed beyond our means to support excessive federal welfare and food stamp giveaways?
- Forced busing must be stopped?
- Our nation must develop our energy resources rapidly to avoid dependence on foreign countries?
- Support for a United Nations which regularly denounces America and its allies makes no sense and should be discontinued?
- Make your voice heard by joining thousands of others as a member of The Conservative Caucus.

The lack of direct emphasis on race is deceptive, however. During the presidential campaign, there was a brief flare-up over whether Reagan's call for 'states rights' was a coded message to his potential racist supporters in the South, because the slogan of states rights had been used by Southern racists in the 1950s and 1960s to resist the attempts of the Federal Government to desegregate schooling and ensure the right of blacks to vote. But, in fact, 'states rights' is one of many recognised codes for attacks on the Black Movement.

The most obvious manifestation of the politics of euphemism in the United States is the campaign for law and order. In his book *Thinking About Crime*, Neo-Conservative criminologist James Q. Wilson argues against the practical applicability of any 'social' theory of crime, claiming that 'if we regard any crime prevention or crime



reduction program as deficient because it does not address the "root causes" of crime, then we shall commit ourselves to futile acts that frustrate the citizen while they ignore the criminal'.<sup>33</sup> Human behaviour, he goes on, 'ultimately derives from human volition', and that volition, if not the product of pure chance, is 'the product of biological and social processes that we cannot or will not change'.

Wilson's interest in the biological factor soon becomes clear. Most of his concern, he tells us, is with 'predatory street crime', which increased substantially in the United States in the 1960s. Wilson's first – and consistently returned to – example of this phenomenon is Washington DC, precisely because 'it has a large black population, a high crime rate, and is the source of countless stories about popular fears of criminal attack'.<sup>34</sup> Wilson denies, however, that he is making a direct identification of street crime as a black problem, because, for him, 'social class ... is a much better predictor of behaviour than race', and, indeed, 'much of what passes for "race prejudice" today may be little more than class prejudice'.<sup>35</sup> But as, in Wilson's view, race is itself 'a rough indicator of social class', the 'urban lower class' being 'disproportionately black', a dark skin remains 'a statistically significant cue to social status, and thus to potential criminality'.<sup>36</sup>

Wilson's syllogistic association of poverty, blackness and crime does not merely allow him to advocate repressive measures against blacks without seeming to. It allows him to make another important association: between blacks and welfare. 'Alarming rises in welfare rates' are associated with 'drug abuse and youthful unemployment'; and we already know that urban blacks are 'typical addicts' and that 'the increase in teenage and young adult unemployment' has been 'particularly sharp among non-whites'.<sup>37</sup> Again, Washington DC is 'in the grip of a massive crime, heroin and welfare problem',<sup>38</sup> and 'for young women, or a fraction of them, welfare rather than heroin led to their identification as a significant group'.<sup>39</sup> Thus, welfare is seen as a female alternative to heroin addiction and therefore to crime: all three phenomena are thus neatly tied up in the same racial package, and Wilson's 'voluntarist' attitude to crime is extended to encompass welfare receipt. 'Men steal because the benefits of stealing exceed the costs of stealing by a wider margin than the benefits of working exceed the costs of working',<sup>40</sup> he says, implying that at no time have men not worked because there is no work for them to do.

(This idea that unemployment is never a real, external problem is a hardy Neo-Conservative perennial. Kristol, for example, has written that 'welfare policy in the United States is based on a very simple – and enormously flattering – thesis about American human nature', which is that 'all Americans are highly motivated to work', whereas in fact, most poor people are not 'fanatics about work' and *for that reason* 'move on to the welfare rolls in very large numbers'.<sup>41</sup>)

Once crime and welfare have become code concepts, others easily follow. If street crime is black, then the campaign against gun control is, in part, a matter of white 'self-protection'. If welfare is black, then state-funded abortions for welfare recipients are a black issue too, as is government bureaucracy, and government spending, at federal and state level. It is arguable indeed that California's tax-cutting referendum Proposition 13 was as much a vote against black welfare as it was a vote for lower taxes.

In the context of euphemism on this scale, the priorities of the New Right take on a different character. Of the eight issues mentioned in the Conservative Caucus' flyer quoted above, five can be said to have a racial implication (busing, 'reckless government spending', subsidies to New York City, gun control and 'excessive federal welfare giveaways'). A list in *Conservative Digest*<sup>42</sup> of the New Right's key social issues – 'abortion, busing, gun rights, pornography, crime' – is two 'family' to three 'race'. And in a comprehensive list of fifteen specific issues from Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus,<sup>43</sup> three are military (army unionisation, unilateral disarmament, inadequate US defences), two are international (the 'surrender' of the Panama Canal, SALT II), three are 'family' (abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment and Gay Rights), two are directly racial (again, busing and 'reverse discrimination'), two concern crime and three concern economic questions that are associated with high welfare spending (inflation itself, deficit spending and socialised medicine).

But even more central than the politics of euphemism to the racism of the Reagan coalition is an ideological construct, developed by the Neo-Conservatives and taken up by the New Right. As Alan Crawford writes: 'New Right pundits have drawn much ammunition in their polemical war ... from the works of neo-conservative writers and scholars like Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell who, in an unwitting assist, have focused on the concept of the "new Class"'.<sup>44</sup>

The person with whom the new class concept is most associated is indeed Kristol. He is well known for his view that the expansion of higher education and the government-owned sector of the economy has produced a 'new class' that is 'hostile to the business community', and consists of 'scientists, teachers and educational administrators, journalists and others in the communication industries, psychologists, social workers, those lawyers and doctors who make their careers in the expanding public sector, city planners, the staffs of the large foundations, the upper levels of the government bureaucracy, and so on'.<sup>45</sup> This new class has as its aim 'the gradual usurpation of managerial authority ... mainly through the transfer of this authority to the new breed of regulatory agencies', in order to direct America 'toward an economic system so stringently regulated in detail as to fulfil many of the traditional anti-capitalist aspirations of the left'.<sup>46</sup>



It is important to point out, however, that Kristol's use of the new class concept is relatively modest compared with the use to which it is put by others. The idea of an anti-bourgeois, intellectual dissidence is not of course new. What Kristol has done is to modernise the theory (which goes back at least to the French Revolution) and to extend it to encompass not just intellectuals, artists and bohemians, but also the new technocrats of the information industries and the state sector. What some of his followers have done to Kristol's concept, however, is to turn it into a fully-fledged conspiracy theory.

\* \* \*

Conspiracy theories seek to explain malign historical developments by blaming them on the activities of groups of power-seeking people, operating in secret and to a hidden agenda, who manipulate other groups of people to do their bidding by a variety of means (including ownership and/or control of the media and the political parties), and who also enter into covert alliances with various dispossessed groups in society, allegedly to aid their battle against oppression, but in fact to use them as a means for seizing power for themselves. The best known conspiracy theory, one could say *the* conspiracy theory, is the anti-semitic variety developed by the German Nazis on the basis of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, a Czarist forgery which purports to outline a Jewish plot for world power, on the basis of a secret plan to mobilise the dispossessed (the Elders promise to 'simultaneously throw upon the streets whole mobs of workers in all the countries of Europe') in order to destroy existing society and impose 'a despotism of magnificent proportions'.

A variant of the same theory is at the core of the ideology of the American John Birch Society, founded in 1959 by Robert Welch, who achieved some notoriety when he described President Eisenhower as 'a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy'.<sup>47</sup> But the Birch view of the international plot is given much more flesh by the Birch Society's chief ideologue Gary Allen in his book *None Dare Call it Conspiracy*. For Allen, there is 'an international conspiratorial drive for power on the part of men in high places willing to use any means to bring about their desired aim – global conquest', the main device of which is communism, 'a movement created, manipulated and used by power-seeking billionaires ... an arm of a bigger conspiracy run from New York, London and Paris'.<sup>48</sup>

Not surprisingly, Allen's book was once distributed free by the (British) National Front, but it is worth pointing out that, although the John Birch Society has been frequently infiltrated by anti-semites, anti-semitism is not an inherent component of the Birch world-view. Historically, for Allen, the conspiracy began not with the Learned



Elders, but with the secret societies of eighteenth-century Europe, and in particular the Illuminati; and other Birch Society material (particularly a long pamphlet called *1789*, which 'explores the early history of The Communist Conspiracy', blaming it almost entirely on Illuminism) confirms and develops Allen's view.

What the Nazi and Birch conspiracy theories have in common is that they seek not just to define a class and its aims, but also (a) to accuse it of underhand duplicity in the pursuit of those aims, and (b) to allege that this class seeks secretly to use and exploit the miseries of another, and very different, class to achieve its objectives.

The new class concept was, as stated, largely the creation of Eastern Jewish intellectuals, and therefore bears no relationship to *the* conspiracy theory, or even the Birch variant. It is often however, *a* conspiracy theory, in the sense that I have defined it.

For Kristol, for example, the new class, although continuing 'to speak the language of "progressive reform"', is in actuality 'acting on a hidden agenda'.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, 'the more attentively one studies the problem, the clearer it becomes that what is commonly called a "bias" or an "animus" against business is really a by-product of a larger purposiveness'.<sup>50</sup> And Kristol defines the 'hidden agenda' and the 'larger purposiveness' of the new class in the following terms: 'They are not interested in money but are heavily interested in power. Power for what? Well, the power to shape our civilisation.'<sup>51</sup>

Apocalyptic stuff, indeed. But Kristol's followers are even more inclined to see a secret plan behind all manifestations of liberal opinion. Take, for example, an article by Ronald Butt, a columnist of our own *Times* and *Sunday Times*, but, on this occasion, writing for the American New Right's academic journal, *Policy Review*.<sup>52</sup>

Butt's analysis of 'Britain's Permanent Liberal Government' reproduces some of the tone, if not of course the content, of the conspiratorial writings of the Birchers and the anti-semites. For Gary Allen of the John Birch Society, the conspiracy is propagated by 'secret, ostensibly respectable comrades in the government and establishment';<sup>53</sup> and, similarly, Ronald Butt's 'new elite' is 'politicised towards the left', although this is 'certainly not the way they present themselves'. For the founder of the Birch Society, any presidential hopeful needs 'to know the strong communist support behind-the-scenes he will have to get';<sup>54</sup> for Butt, 'the new elite has become so well entrenched in public life, covertly and overtly, that it is dangerous to the credibility of any public figure ... to subject its ideas to any stringent analysis or forthright challenge'. And, according to the National Front, there is a conspiracy by 'silent and invisible' men, who 'prefer to operate behind the scenes' because 'whenever they need a spokesman, they have the subservient mass-media at their beck and call'.<sup>55</sup> And Butt's new elite, too, operates 'behind the lines of public

life, using every device available in today's sophisticated means of communication for conditioning the minds of politicians and the public alike'.

But the thesis reaches the status of a full-blown conspiracy theory only in those expressions of it that posit an alliance between the new class and the dispossessed. Irving Kristol, as it happens, rarely hints at such an alliance, but he is more or less alone in this among devotees of the concept. For Norman Podhoretz, certainly, the new class is creating its own shockforce: in the 1960s, he states, the "New Class" of educated, prosperous people, members of the professional and technical intelligentsia were 'making a serious bid to dislodge and replace the business and commercial class ... *using its own young people as commandoes*' (my emphasis).<sup>56</sup>

But most Neo-Conservative and New Right commentators look to a rather different alliance. For William Rusher, the New Right ideologue whose ideas for a re-alliance of American politics were so triumphantly vindicated in November, the post-war welfare state has created a 'new economic fracture line' that has taken over from the old division between 'the haves and the have-nots'. Instead,

a new economic division pits the producers – businessmen, manufacturers, hard-hats, blue-collar workers, and farmers – against the new and powerful class of nonproducers comprised of a liberal verbalist elite (the dominant media, the major foundations and research institutions, the educational establishment, the federal and state bureaucracies) and a semi-permanent welfare constituency, all coexisting happily in a state of mutually sustaining symbiosis.<sup>57</sup>

This analysis leads, of course, to the creation of the kind of alliance that toppled Carter – 'businessmen and their employees have today far more interests in common than either have with the nonproducing verbalists'<sup>58</sup> – but it is an alliance based on mutual hostility, not so much to another alliance as to a conspiracy between the new class and 'the vast new welfare class created and manipulated by these groups ... a permanent parasite on the body politic', which has been 'carefully tended and forever subtly expanded by the verbalisers as a justification for their own existence and growth'.<sup>59</sup> And, in case the specific identity of the welfare constituency is in doubt, Rusher defines it as follows:

Considered ethnically, the new division pits Establishment WASPs plus their minority group allies against Middle Americans and the hyphenated ethnics (Italo-Americans, Polish-Americans, etc). Establishment WASPs are in a position to 'pay off' their minority group allies with all sorts of cultural and economic goodies ... The busing blitzkrieg of South Boston by affluent liberals in the suburbs is a fine case study here.<sup>60</sup>



And, by creating this shibboleth of a conspiracy between the new class and its minority stormtroops, conservatives are able to move from conventional conservatism into the arena of the populist radical right. Conspiracy theories have always sought to combine in one acceptable construct the radical instincts of the vast middle layers of society (those instincts of hatred and resentment directed at the rich above them) with a rationale for retaining their superiority over the masses of the poor below them. The new class concept is precisely such a conspiracy theory, creating a common enemy that at one and the same time consists of 'affluent liberals' and the black and Hispanic 'parasites' on welfare.

A further twist is given by Nathan Glazer, in the introduction to his book *Affirmative Discrimination*. Glazer is talking to the highest layers of the middle class; to those most at risk from the new class infection. So when he speaks of the 'minority' who aim for a 'quota society', he must make it clear that 'I speak not of blacks and Hispanic Americans, who oppose a quota society almost as much as other Americans; I speak of those who claim to speak for them' (my emphasis).<sup>61</sup> Thus is Glazer able to challenge 'the moral authority that comes from speaking for a group that has suffered fierce prejudice and discrimination and is now ridden with social problems',<sup>62</sup> and to go on, unfettered by any sense of moral guilt, to attack a 'new class', acting as self-appointed protectors of the poor and minorities, disdainful of the interests of those whom they see as "middle Americans" without concern for the poor'.<sup>63</sup> So Glazer, by claiming that *blacks themselves* are *unwilling* victims of the 'hidden agenda', is able to provide, at a stroke, not only an anti-bureaucratic justification for the racist instincts of his audience, but also a justification that does not come up against any 'moral authority' of white guilt. For those who wish so to read *Affirmative Discrimination*, indeed, standing up against anti-racist government measures is standing up *for* minorities *against* the rich and powerful who are manipulating them for their own ends.

Finally, it is perhaps worth noting the way in which the new class concept is being re-dressed in British weeds. I have already mentioned the new class arguments of Ronald Butt of *The Times*, in the New Right's *Policy Review*. It is interesting to note that in that article, Butt's only two examples of actual leaders of 'the left-inclined elite' are Roy Jenkins and David Owen. The former is, of course, particularly associated with the 1966-70 Labour government's race relations policy; the latter is berated by Butt as a 'race-radical' who found 'quite unbearable' the thought that, in Zimbabwe, 'Mr Smith and the whites ... might get away with a peaceful multiracial outcome without suffering for their sins'.<sup>64</sup> And it is the same Ronald Butt who has increasingly argued that the Conservative Party, if it is to succeed, must 'appeal to patriotism' and 'a sense of national community',<sup>65</sup> pointing out that

among the government's already broken promises to the nation is the fact that 'it has done nothing of importance to redeem its pledge to stop further immigration'.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, Dr Stephen Haseler of the Social Democratic Alliance, who is on the editorial board of *Policy Review* and spent a year as a 'distinguished scholar' of the *Review*'s parent, the Heritage Foundation, in 1977-8, has learnt much from his transatlantic contacts. In his recent book *The Tragedy of Labour*, he outlines the new class concept, quoting Irving Kristol as he goes, in British terms:

The Labour machine can now call in aid the power and influence of a new class in society, one that it has helped to create in the first place. This 'new class' must ultimately defend and protect the Labour machine because its very existence is dependent on it ... There emerges a convenient convergence between the legitimate needs of welfare on the one hand and the necessary power base for the New Class and the Labour machine on the other.<sup>67</sup>

And Haseler borrows, too, the concept of an alliance between the new class and the black population against the 'producers', though in this case the issue is immigration not busing, and the 'producers' are, as befits the 'social-democrat' Haseler, the working class:

The modern British socialists's concern for the integrity of working-class community life is further discredited by the general attitude of the socialist to the daunting question of race and immigration. Again the modern British socialist appears as an outsider looking in, sharing in few of the problems but constantly ready to impose a solution. This vantage-point is understandable amongst the better-off, progressive elites ...<sup>68</sup>

In conclusion, much attention has been paid, over the last months, to the inspiration that the Thatcher victory has given to American conservatives and, in particular, to the Reagan coalition. Less attention has been paid to transatlantic traffic the other way. Both the Neo-Conservatives and the New Right have developed sophisticated forms of political discourse that can exploit racist sentiments without appearing to. As the monetarist catastrophe deepens, and the Thatcher government is forced to combine physical repression with ideological evocations of ideas like 'the community' and 'the nation', we can expect such forms of discourse to become increasingly current here.

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## Pakistan: class and state formation

Pakistan and India emerged as independent countries from the partition of 'British' India in 1947. They had shared not only colonial subjugation by the British, but, before that, about two centuries of Mughal rule. Mughal rule was the culmination of an Indo-Islamic society and culture which had been in the making since the advent of the Gaznavids in northern Indian around AD 1000. Since independence, both countries have faced similar economic and social problems: dependence on advanced capitalist states and economic underdevelopment; a poverty-stricken populace largely deprived of basic education, housing and health services; mounting social tensions and unrest. Yet their political structures stand in sharp contrast. India is characterised by a stable parliamentary system. There have been free and periodic elections, civilian control over the military, decentralised power with some provincial autonomy and a Parliament and judiciary which have allowed for a modicum of governmental accountability. By contrast, Pakistan has been under military rule for over half of its thirty-three years of independence. Parliaments and other participatory institutions have been weak, when not entirely suppressed. There has been persistent regional opposition to central authority, periodic social upheavals and in 1971 the disintegration of the country.

The nature of the state and of politics in the periphery is determined by the colonial experience and by neo-colonial relationships, but the

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cumulative impact of colonial rule on India and Pakistan was qualitatively different in terms of both class and state formation. This difference was related not only to the economic forces at work but also to the strategic considerations of *Pax Britannica*. As a result, Pakistan, unlike India, inherited a military-bureaucratic state structure, a strong landed class, an almost non-existent industrial bourgeoisie and a weak commercial one. These classes lacked a social base and were dependent on the state for their economic and political power. Only the educated middle class, especially from East Bengal, provided a weak impulse towards political democracy.

Before examining this further, however, it is necessary to look briefly at the period of Mughal rule over the subcontinent (from the early sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries).

### **North-western India under the Mughals**

Although the impact of the Mughal system was uneven throughout the Indian subcontinent, there was no qualitative difference in the social development of the different regions that would account for contemporary differences in state and politics.

The north-western region, which constitutes Pakistan today, consisted, like most of India, of sparsely populated mountainous regions inhabited by nomadic and 'tribal' people, on the one hand, and densely populated, relatively rich, settled agricultural regions, on the other. Baluchistan and the 'tribal belt' of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) fell into the first category, while much of Punjab, Sind and the settled districts of NWFP fell into the second.

In the settled agricultural areas, cultivation was carried on either by tenants, as in Sind,<sup>1</sup> or by peasant farmers, as in Punjab, organised in the well-known Indian village communities. Contrary to the classical view, cultivated land was held in separate, not common, possession.<sup>2</sup> Subject to due payment of revenue, the peasant's connection with the village was regarded as a settled fact. He had title to permanent and hereditary occupancy of the land he tilled and could also transmit land to his heirs. But there was no question of really free alienation, that is, legal rights to abandon or dispose of the land as its holder might choose. The surplus produced by agriculture was considerable as output was far higher than was necessary for subsistence. This surplus was extracted in the form of land revenue, which varied from one-third to one-half and was realised most often in cash. Formally speaking, land revenue was not 'rent' from the land but a tax on the crop, 'remunerations of sovereignty', paid in return for the protection and justice the king secured for his subject.<sup>3</sup> Land revenue was collected directly from the peasant, either by officials of the king or by various intermediaries. Some were officers of the state (*mansabdars*) who, in lieu of salaries,



were assigned the revenue of an area, but had no independent claim on the land. They constituted the ruling class of the empire, but were entirely dependent on the state for their existence. Frequent transfers, confiscation of assets at death and lack of a social base prevented them from consolidating independent power. Chiefs (known variously as *rajas*, *ranas*, etc.), on the other hand, claimed sovereignty over the areas they held. However, among other things, they had to pay a fixed tribute to or provide troops for the imperial power, in return for keeping their internal jurisdiction. Similarly, the *zamindars* often possessed a particular right to the land – a right which had originated independently of the imperial power, and was usually accompanied by the possession of armed forces. They derived income either through a separate rate on the peasant, or through holding a portion of the land revenue. Their power varied – some were entirely subordinate to the imperial administration, others were virtually independent chieftains.

In the non-agricultural sector the volume of trade, commerce and craft production was as significant as anywhere else in India. According to Habib, there were some 40,000 boats, 'small and big plying in the Sarkar of Thatta (Sind)';<sup>4</sup> and Pottinger reports that in the mid-eighteenth century 'there were 40,000 weavers of calico and longees in that city [Thatta], and artisans of every other class and description, to the number of twenty thousand more, exclusive of bankers, money-changers, shop-keepers, and sellers of grain who were estimated at sixty thousand'.<sup>5</sup> Vast quantities of Sindhi handicrafts were exported from Goa and coast towns, while in Punjab, cities like Lahore were considered equal to the great European cities of the time. Other cities known for trade and crafts production were Multan, Gujrat, Sialkot, Dera Ghazi Khan. Foreign trade is said to have flourished in Jehlum,<sup>6</sup> and putting-out systems of manufacture were already in evidence on the eve of the British conquest, although not on so large a scale as in south and north-east India.<sup>7</sup> Manufacturing in workshops (*karkhanas* established by nobles) was less usual, but did exist in cities like Lahore, where the Mughals often held court.

By comparison, the mountainous regions of Baluchistan and the 'tribal belts' of NWFP were backward. The lack of arable land predicated economic activity based on nomadic and semi-nomadic cattle breeding for the bulk of the people. Agricultural production, where settled farming did take place, was low. The small surplus generated was appropriated by tribal *sardars* (chiefs) through a complex and diverse system of taxation, using, as in most of Mughal India, both tax-farmers and appointed officials. These *sardars* ruled over small, de facto sovereign principalities, and though subservient to Great Mughals or Iranian Shahs, like many Hindu chiefs in central India, they remained autonomous, only having to pay tribute or supply troops. Constituting an independent ruling class, they did not owe their existence

to the Mughal state; in fact, they were often in arms against it, especially in the North West Frontier.

In the non-agricultural sector there is little evidence of the beginnings of manufacture, or of widespread handicraft production, as in many other parts of Mughal India. But there is evidence of considerable internal and external trade, for the principal land routes to central Asia, Persia and beyond ran through these regions. Pottinger describes Kalat as 'a great channel for merchandise for Kandhar, Kabool and Khorasan to India, the traders being induced to prefer this route on account of the low customs'.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in the North West Frontier, external trade flourished. Indian merchants, engaged in trade, 'had amassed huge capitals'.<sup>9</sup> Some tribal chiefs engaged in trade themselves, but most had Hindu agents to transact their business, supplying them with 'artifacts of foreign manufacture and growth, in return for the local produce'.<sup>10</sup> Much of the rest of the trading was conducted by immigrants from the neighbouring provinces of Punjab and Sind.

Despite this uneven social and economic development, the nature of the economic system was essentially the same throughout the subcontinent. The nature of the merchant class, for instance, hardly differed from one area to another, irrespective of its size. But, unlike the independent merchant class of Europe growing in the interstices of feudalism, in India it was dependent on the appropriation and consumption of agrarian surplus by a small and centralised ruling class. This meant, as Habib has pointed out, that when a crisis developed in the agrarian sector, it brought down not only the Mughal empire and its ruling class, but also the entire commercial structure.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the period of 'great anarchy', that characterised India in the eighteenth century, did not produce a new social order but led to the further subjugation of India by a new set of predatory conquerors. Unlike the previous ones, they were English and came by sea. The consequences of this were to change the course of Indian history.

### **Colonial impact**

By the time the north-western region was colonised, in the middle and late nineteenth century, most of the eastern seaboard had been in contact with European merchant settlements for two centuries; north-east India had been under the rule of the English East India Company for a century; and most of south, central and northern India for half a century. The impact of British colonialism in India, therefore, was uneven both in space and time, not only because of the time lag in colonisation, but also because colonial policies underwent several changes during this period in response to the colonial experience, the changing needs of the British economy and shifts in imperialist strategy.



But the 1857 uprising marked a watershed in colonial policies and brought about major changes. Sparked off by isolated mutinies in the armies of the East India Company, it became the first large-scale rebellion seriously to threaten the continuation of British rule in India. A variety of causes have been put forward to explain the uprising, but at its root lay the legal and institutional changes in the land and revenue systems introduced by British rule. The introduction of private property in land, the heavy and often inelastic cash assessments and the forced sale of land rights, for revenue arrears or settling debts, resulted in a large-scale transfer of land in most of north and north-east India from rural magnates (*tuluqdars*) and small landholders to urban trading and money-lending castes. In the event, *tuluqdars* found common cause with debt-ridden peasants and displaced weavers in the uprising that followed.<sup>12</sup>

The influence of the rebellion on colonial policy has been widely discussed. Most scholars agree that it marked the end of the period of early Victorian 'reforming' zeal. Westernisation came to be viewed as 'a dangerous and explosive business'.<sup>13</sup> The intensive penetration of traditional society was replaced by cautious preservation of the pre-existing social order. It seemed more sensible to take Indian society as it was, to concentrate on administration and control, and to shore up the landed aristocrats, who came to be viewed as the 'natural leaders' best suited to the 'oriental mind'.<sup>14</sup> In the recently conquered, strategically important north-west, this ethos was particularly prominent and its conflation with economic and strategic forces was important in shaping the social and political structures of the future Pakistan.

Economic interests were basic to British expansion in India. Extension of colonial control secured sources of food and raw materials, such as wheat and cotton, as well as markets for British cotton textiles at a time when Britain had become the 'workshop of the world'. Irrigation projects in Punjab and Sind stimulated the production of cotton, although an appreciable increase both in quantity and quality did not occur until the 1920s and 1930s. Railways not only made accessible markets and raw material sources, but also provided an outlet for British capital goods, which had expanded from 11 to 22 per cent in the world economy between the middle and late nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

Control of India had become crucial to Britain's continuing position of dominance in the world economy. In the latter half of the century, the surplus in India's trade with the rest of the world rose from £4 million to £50 million, and squared the deficits arising elsewhere in Britain's balance of payments. At the same time, India provided markets for British textiles, cotton goods and other products which were being challenged in other markets. Moreover, the British balance of payments with India was augmented by receipts from 'home charges'

(that is, charges for the colonial administration) and from interest on the Indian government debt, which rose from £70 million to £225 million in the last quarter of the century. As Brown concludes, 'India was in truth the Jewel in the Imperial Diadem'.<sup>16</sup> Little wonder that Gallagher and Robinson, amongst others, view British colonial expansion in Africa in the late nineteenth century as motivated by concern for the defence of India.<sup>17</sup> And in that defence, the north-western region was crucial, for two reasons. Firstly, it was strategically important because the two 'gateways' to India were located there: through Kandahar and Quetta in Baluchistan and through the Khyber in the North West Frontier. Beyond these lay the disputed territories in Afghanistan and Persia and the forces of rival expansionism, most particularly that of Russia.

Second, Punjab and the North West Frontier were the main recruiting grounds for the Indian Army, especially after the revolt of 1857. By 1880, Indian tax-payers supported 130,000 Indian and 66,000 British troops; 40 per cent of the Indian government's gross expenditure went to the Army.<sup>18</sup> Not only was it used to defend the western frontiers against Russian advances on central Asia and to crush anti-colonial movements in India, but also to protect British interests around the world. It was sent to China in 1839, 1856 and 1859; Persia in 1856; Afghanistan in 1878; Egypt in 1882; Burma in 1885; Nyasa in 1843; Mombasa and Uganda in 1896; Sudan in 1896 and 1897; Ethiopia in 1867; Singapore in 1867, and South Africa during the Boer War. Nearly 60 per cent of the men came from the north-western region, 50 per cent of them from Punjab alone, and 50-70 per cent of the Army were Muslims.<sup>19</sup>

The combination of all these factors – the lessons learnt from the revolt of 1857, the overriding economic importance of India to Britain, the strategic requirements necessary for its defence – produced in the north-west a closer alliance between the landed elite and the colonial state; the British hoped to maintain stability by reinforcing traditional authority. At the same time, the colonial militarist, authoritarian and 'national security' ethos and tradition had its strongest presence here and so served to shape and inform the structures of government and administration. The consequences of these policies for class and state formation in the north-west were profound and lasting.

### **The landed elite: authority and legitimacy**

When Punjab (including the settled districts of the North West Frontier) was annexed, the policy was to make peasant and joint village settlements – but many large landowners were still retained. (The subdivision and sale of land which had ruined so many old landed families in northern India had not taken full effect here by the time of the 1857



revolt.) After the revolt, however, the colonial administration strengthened this aristocracy and consolidated its estates with a view to securing its allegiance.\*

Alongside the large landowners there also grew a class of rich farmers – the products of large-scale canal colonisation in the late nineteenth century designed to stimulate cash-crop production. Such projects had an added advantage: by settling the region with land-holders in lots of 100 acres or more, local support was created in a region of strategic military importance. Most of the new settlers, both in Punjab and Sind, were retired military personnel<sup>21</sup> who, by virtue of their superior technical training and financial condition, became relatively prosperous farmers.\*\*

This landed elite and rich farmer class, tied to the Army, acquired a special position in the military-bureaucratic administrative system. Unlike the rest of India, the north-western region was ruled as 'non-regulation' provinces. In effect, this meant bureaucratic rule without the legal hindrances enshrined in the 'regulations' which had been introduced in the late eighteenth century in the presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras. The administrative ideal in the north-west was summed up as 'a strong administration suited to a manly and headstrong people'.<sup>23</sup> As such, they were governed by district commissioners who combined judicial, executive and revenue authorities. Unlike most of India, the upper echelons of these provincial administrations were not confined to the officers of the Indian Civil Service, but included a number of military officers. The Indian Political Service, which played a considerable part in governing this area, also consisted largely of army officers. 'Democratic' institutions, such as legislative councils and independent judiciaries, and democratic practices, such as elections – which had been established earlier in Bengal, Madras and Bombay – were only introduced into Punjab at the end of the nineteenth century and into the NWFP and Sind in the 1920s (and into Baluchistan never).

If deliberate colonial policy served to increase the power of the landed gentry, it was no less augmented by the commercialisation of agriculture, in the context of declining handicrafts and the absence of

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\*Griffin's detailed histories of Punjab's landed families show how the landed elite was strengthened after 1857. In Sind, 2,000 big *jagirdars* were confirmed in their incomes and privileges upon tending allegiance to the British.<sup>20</sup>

\*\*Wealth also came into Punjab around this period from another source. After 1857, most of the ordinary soldiers were drawn from the peasants of Punjab, many of whom had been forced to enlist because of debts, and they sent home a substantial part of their pay. This had the effect of diverting the stream of remittances from the most densely populated regions, such as Bengal, which had supplied the bulk of the army before 1857, into Punjab.<sup>22</sup>

industrial development. In the process, however, the landed elite lost its traditional legitimacy without having it replaced by any new legitimising principle.

The introduction of private property and a free market in land removed customary rights over land and the many protective devices by which the cultivator was guaranteed a minimum income. Also, in contrast to the traditional system which made flexible land revenue demands upon the cultivator, the British insisted upon prompt and full payment of revenue each year, thus forcing the peasant to borrow or default. In case of default, his livestock, household property and personal effects could be confiscated, and the peasant could be evicted. The numbers of agricultural labourers who were either landless, or virtually so, increased threefold in all of India between 1891 and 1931.<sup>24</sup> Other smallholders simply sold out, and the former cultivator, instead of paying a debt, now paid a rental and simply became the money-lender's tenant. The acreage of land tilled by tenants rose steadily from the end of the nineteenth century and, according to Moore, the number of tenants went on increasing until the 1930s.<sup>25</sup> The situation became so bad that the government had to pass legislation restricting the right of the cultivator to alienate his lands to non-cultivating castes such as money-lenders. However, this did not reduce indebtedness, but simply restricted rural credit and created a class of wealthy peasants among the cultivating castes who also became money-lenders.

Rural class differentiation was further sharpened by growing pressure on the land. The first element in this was the rapid rise in population in what was later to become Pakistan.<sup>26</sup> The second was the destruction of urban handicrafts industries, largely through the inundation of cheap machine-made British goods, especially textiles. \* Artisans migrated from the cities back to the villages, leaving their 'looms for the plough'; while others, who might otherwise have been absorbed into urban industry, stayed on the land. Thus, in a complete reversal of the pre-colonial situation, land became scarce and labour plenty. Not only did the landed elite become economically prosperous, but also socially powerful, as the absence of any form of employment other than agricultural produced an imperfect labour market. In principle, the peasant became 'free' to sell his labour power, but in practice he became more dependent than ever on the landlord for his livelihood.

In the Mughal period, *zamindars* and *tuluqdars* had derived their

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\*Indian handicrafts were destroyed in several stages. To protect English manufactures, Indian cotton goods were barred from the English home market by means of prohibitive tariffs; the conquest of India led to a fall in domestic demand because of the disappearance of native courts and changes in fashion under foreign influences; finally, there was competition from cheap machine-made English cotton goods after 1813.



authority from custom and usage; now they did so on the strength of an alien state. In the past, the peasants' exploitation had been mitigated by hereditary rights and securities embedded in custom and usage; now they were deprived of these while exploited as before. And it was this disjuncture between legitimacy and authority which gave rise to a series of peasant revolts, especially in Bengal, but also in the north-west,\* where such disjuncture was exacerbated by the absence of an independent and strong bourgeoisie.

### **The industrialists and the businessmen**

Unlike India, Pakistan did not inherit an independent industrial capitalist class with social roots or a political base. This was not because Muslims were 'not well fitted for industrial leadership',<sup>27</sup> or because they knew only two professions, 'administration and warfare'.<sup>28</sup> A more plausible explanation lies in the differential impact of colonialism.

The rise of modern industry was generally retarded by colonial economic relations, and the rise of indigenous enterprises was even slower. This was partly because they came up against the power of the British mercantile houses, or managing agencies,\*\* and partly because they received little state patronage in the form of tariff protections – so important in the industrial development of the colonies of white settlement. Yet between the two world wars, a relatively significant Indian bourgeois class came into being.

Britain's struggle with Japan over textile markets contributed to giving tariff protection to Indians, while the depression of the 1930s provided an opportunity for Indians to acquire British-owned assets and gain economic independence. Although the depression did not allow for the rapid growth of Indian industry, this still managed to achieve a fair degree of self-sufficiency in the manufacture of simple consumer goods, and some producer goods. Most of the industrial development was at first concentrated around Bombay and Calcutta, but it did spread to south, central and northern India. The industrial bourgeoisie that emerged, even though part of an economy integrated and subordinated to world capitalism, was not a comprador one and developed independent of the colonial state.

The north-western region and East Bengal, by contrast, remained

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\*Besides the peasant uprisings during the 1857 revolt, other, largely Muslim, peasant movements included the Whabbi movement led by Saiyed Ahmad Bareilly, the Faraizi movement in Bengal and the Mopallah rebellion in the south.

\*\*Under the managing agency system a single business organisation runs the affairs of a dozen or more concerns operating in a number of different fields.

industrially and commercially backward\* for a variety of reasons. The foundations of industry in India had been laid, for the most part, by foreigners around the great port cities, which had become the commercial centres after the earliest European trading companies established themselves there. This trading activity had also provided an opportunity for native, mostly non-Muslim, trading communities/castes to accumulate considerable capital, either as agents or even in competition with European traders. Most of these were later to become industrialists. Since the commercial centres were located along the southern and eastern coasts of India, the north-western provinces were relatively untouched by this process of commercial embourgeoisement. Furthermore, as both native and foreign enterprises expanded into the interior, industries were developed and factories built near the reserves of iron, coal and other fuel resources; none of these were found in large quantities in what is now Pakistan. The north-western region was largely turned into an agricultural appendage and a recruiting ground for the armed forces. The ports of Karachi, Sind, and Pasni and Gwadar on the Baluchistan coastline, were never developed, which also inhibited industrial and commercial activity. As the jute industry developed around Calcutta, based on the large coal and iron resources of West Bengal, East Bengal became the largest supplier of raw jute. Similarly, East Bengal continued to be served by the port of Calcutta, and Chittagong was not developed.

A few Muslim business communities existed, engaged in shipping and commerce, on the west coast and around Bombay. But they were unable to meet the competition from the larger non-Muslim bourgeoisie, which had also adopted the managing agency system and was organised in tightly-knit castes. During the 1920s, particularly during the depression, small entrepreneurs were simply weeded out; many Muslim business communities migrated to other parts of the British empire, especially South and East Africa. The more successful Muslim business communities conducted business outside of India. The biggest of these, the Bawanis, had their capital invested in Rangoon, while the Fancies invested in East Africa. Others, such as Adamjis, Siagols, Habibs, Isphanis and Rahimtaloas, remained small entrepreneurs, mostly engaged in commercial activity outside the area that came to be Pakistan.

These business families hailed from Gujrat and Kathiawar on the

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\*Pakistan inherited 9.6 per cent of the total number of industrial enterprises in India, 5.3 per cent of the existing electric capacity and 6.5 per cent of the industrial workers. Many of these enterprises were small-scale. The percentage of seasonal factories to full-time factories, for instance, was 41.1, as opposed to 26.6 in India. Similarly, the percentage of seasonal to full-time employment was 28.1, compared to 9.9 in India. Commercial activity, too, was relatively low in the areas that became Pakistan.<sup>29</sup>



west coast of India, and belonged to minority sects of Islam, being mostly Memons, Bohras, Khoja Isnashari or Khoja Ismailis, representing roughly 0.3 per cent of the total population of the north-western region.<sup>30</sup> For the north-west and East Bengal, therefore, this business community was 'alien', with few social or cultural roots and little or no political base. The only indigenous business families, in this sense, were the Chinioties, a handful of business families like the Wazir Alis, who belonged to Punjab and also had landed interests. But their interests were small. Industrial activity in Punjab, as elsewhere in the north-west and East Bengal, was cottage or small-scale, and much of it was controlled by non-Muslims.\* As a result, the movement for Pakistan was to lack any element of economic nationalism or any socio-economic programme, and the balance of class forces that Pakistan inherited was to be quite different from that of India.

### **The professionals and the bureaucrats**

The relative difficulty of obtaining employment and social mobility through trade and commerce meant that the state and the professions were looked to as a primary source of employment. Thus, the numbers of lawyers, journalists, writers and bureaucrats increased rapidly, and came to be characterised as the 'middle-class' – though lacking homogeneity in terms of both economic position and political predilection.

A small section of the educated middle class belonged to rich, landed families, mostly from Punjab, the North West Province and Oudh (later called United Provinces) – because it was in these areas that the old, landed Muslim families had best survived the colonial encounter (as was shown above in relation to Punjab). In the United Provinces (UP), the centre of Muslim power under Mughal rule, Muslims were traditionally in a strong position, both in the administration and as landowners. Nor was the Muslim landed and office-holding elite in the UP adversely affected either by changes in the land and administrative systems (as in East Bengal) or by the 1857 revolt. Hence, the colonial concept of education gave this class a built-in advantage to advance in state service and the professions. As Macaulay put it:

It is impossible for us with our limited means to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we

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\*Nearly 80 per cent of the industrial undertakings in the north-west belonged to Hindus. In Lahore they owned 167 of the 215 indigenous factories. Much of the business activity was also controlled by non-Muslims: 95 per cent of the deposits in joint-stock factories in what came to be West Pakistan, 75 per cent of urban immoveable property and 87 per cent of the trade of the port of Karachi.<sup>31</sup>

govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect.<sup>32</sup>

It was this class which filled the legislative councils, elective local bodies, executive boards, law courts and the higher echelons of the Imperial Civil Service.\*

In Punjab they reaped the most benefit – as Muslims constituted the majority of the population there and the colonial administration was careful to accord them a comparable share in the administration so as to maintain communal harmony in a strategic area. And in the UP, though they were a small minority, the Muslims retained in this sector a significant but, by the early twentieth century, declining presence.<sup>33</sup>

The bulk of the educated Muslim middle class, however, consisted of those who ‘occasionally had a small pittance in rents from land, but generally in order to survive had to find employment in services and professions’.<sup>34</sup> The majority of them came from East Bengal, where the Muslim landed and office-holding elite had been destroyed by the changes in the land and administrative systems under British rule, and from the UP. In the UP they were largely the products of Aligarh Muslim College (later University), set up in 1875 by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan’s efforts. The growth of the educated middle class was relatively late, but dramatic: between 1891 and 1901 it increased by 225.5 per cent;<sup>35</sup> by 1921, the percentage of Muslims literate in English in the UP surpassed that of Hindus. In Bengal the numbers of Muslims in universities and colleges, including professional colleges, rose by about 100 per cent between 1921/2 and 1926/7. By this time, however, opportunities were scarce, as jobs became fewer and competition tougher. In the UP, where Muslims were in a relatively strong position, their proportion in the Provincial Executive Service fell from 44.8 per cent to 41.3 per cent between 1887 and 1913, and in the Judicial Services from 45.9 per cent to 24.8 per cent<sup>36</sup>. As the Honorary Secretary of Aligarh Old Boys’ Association put it at the 1913 annual dinner:

Gentlemen, the first and foremost problem is ‘what to do with our boys’ ... we all know that at present the field of service is becoming daily congested in this country, the bar is overcrowded, and the straitened circumstances of our community have placed an embargo on us regarding commerce and industry.<sup>37</sup>

It was this class of educated but unemployed or semi-employed Muslims who led the movement for the separate state of Pakistan. It received little or no support from the more successful professionals and

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\*It was these successful professionals and landlords who were active in the loyalist and non-democratic Muslim politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, first under Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, and later through the Muslim League (1906) in its earlier phases.



big landlords, while the attitude of the Muslim business communities was ambivalent. Its most enthusiastic supporters came from the East Bengali middle classes and a variety of popular democratic forces in the various provinces.

### **The Pakistan movement**

The All India Muslim League which led the movement for the separate state of Pakistan (the Pakistan movement) remained largely an organisation of educated middle-class Muslims. There was no industrial bourgeoisie which could establish its political hegemony over the Pakistan movement, as did the Indian bourgeoisie over the nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress. The few Muslim business families that there were only began to play an important role in the 1940s; and they lacked social roots and an independent economic and political base in the areas that they sought to create as an independent state, in order to seal it off from the competition of the larger Hindu bourgeoisie. Nor could the bulk of the middle class in the Muslim League be anything but ambiguous about Pakistan, because they belonged, as mentioned earlier, to the UP, which was not even to be a part of Pakistan,<sup>38</sup> being a Hindu majority area. They could hardly be expected to have any clear vision of a future state of which they were not to be a part.

Thus the Muslim business class and the bulk of the middle class were primarily interested in improving their bargaining position in any constitutional arrangement, within or without the framework of a united India, so as to ensure their 'due' share in the capitalist cake at the end of British rule. The famous 'Lahore Resolution' of 1940, which first made the demand for partition publicly and officially, was just such a bargaining counter. There is evidence to suggest that the Resolution was an 'overbid' to ensure proper attention to Muslim demands and interests.<sup>39</sup> This is probably why the Resolution remains carefully ambiguous as to what exactly what was being demanded.

It was in East Bengal, which was later to separate from Pakistan, that the support for Pakistan was greatest. The Bengali middle class was totally excluded from government service and the professions because of Hindu domination. It therefore stood to gain most by the creation of a Muslim territory and government, especially if it also included, as was then thought, West Bengal. In addition, the large majority of Muslims in East Bengal were poor peasants living under Hindu landlords, so the movement for Pakistan there became a radical populist issue.

In other Muslim majority provinces, the Pakistan movement also had to compete with or accommodate popular democratic and regional autonomist forces – with the Pukhtun nationalists led by the

*Khuda-i-Khidmatgars* (Servants of God) in NWFP, with the Baluchi nationalists led by the *Khadim-i-Watan* (Servants of the Motherland) and with the Sindhi nationalists who, though they worked within the provincial branch of the Muslim League, mobilised support on the basis of slogans of self-determination for Sind. In Punjab, leftists constituted a section of the provincial branch of the Muslim League and were responsible for its election manifesto.

By 1944-5 the central organs of the Muslim League had difficulty in maintaining control over their provincial branches, which increasingly tended to fall under the influence of leftists and regional autonomists. Under this pressure, Mohammad Ali Jinnah (the founder of Pakistan) started installing the landed elite in positions of authority and leadership, in effect putting forward his own nominees as parliamentary candidates to what was to be Pakistan's constituent assembly. During the formative years of 1946-48, this created in every province 'rivalry or open conflict between the local Muslim League and the Parliamentary Party; between the people and the provincial government'.<sup>40</sup> The Pakistan movement simply foreshadowed these tensions in independent Pakistan.

At independence, therefore, Pakistan inherited a strong landed elite and a small commercial bourgeoisie – both of which, incapable of political tutelage, would come to depend on a military-bureaucratic state for their economic and political survival. On the other hand, a political democratic impulse was provided by the East Bengali middle class and the national minorities in western Pakistan. The nature of capitalist development after independence, however, exacerbated these tensions and frustrated the establishment of political democracy.

### After independence

There is no space here to discuss political developments in Pakistan after independence; moreover, Eqbal Ahmad's article in the Autumn 1980 issue of *Race & Class* gives an excellent account. There are, however, one or two developments which should be noted which have had the effect of tying Pakistan even more closely to a military-bureaucratic regime, and removing any countervailing tendency towards political democracy.

After independence, the small Pakistani business class had to rely entirely on the state for the rapid accumulation it demanded. A massive transfer of resources from agriculture to industry, and the creation of import substitution industries through a variety of controls over foreign trade, together with a number of other 'incentives', created a small but rich bourgeoisie tied to the state.\* But the process

\*In 1968, twenty-two families controlled 66 per cent of the country's total industrial capital, 70 per cent of insurance and 80 per cent of the banking.<sup>41</sup>



of redistributing resources from agriculture to industry meant not only the redistribution of income from the poor to the rich, but also from East Pakistan (East Bengal) to West Pakistan (North West region). East Pakistan accounted for a larger share of agricultural exports than West. Mechanisms, such as import licensing, transferred this surplus to business and industrial interests located in the West. The big landlords of West Pakistan who dominated the state apparatus were able in part to escape the effects of government policy and in part were compensated for its effects. Quite a few landlords entered industrial activities and benefited directly from the systems of control, while the so-called 'green revolution' of the 1960s, based on an 'elite farmer strategy', also benefited the largest landowners.<sup>42</sup> The growing power of this bourgeoisie and landed elite stood in sharp contrast to its narrow social base.

This power has, however, been challenged. In the 1954 Legislative Assembly elections in East Pakistan, the ruling Muslim League, which had led Pakistan to independence on the slogan of Islam, was wiped out by the secular, socialist-oriented United Front. The Bengali middle class was swept into power in the province, precipitating a political crisis at the centre. This threat to the ruling classes of Punjab helped pave the way for the 1958 coup d'état led by General Ayub Khan. A decade later, a popular mass movement brought his regime down, leading to the national elections of 1970 – the first of their kind. The elections resulted in a decisive claim to national power by the Bengali middle class and sparked off the crisis in the state and in politics out of which Bangla Desh was born.

The separation of East Pakistan eliminated the structural absurdity that until 1971 had been Pakistan, and changed the balance of class forces in what was left of it. There remained an intact landed elite, a weakened bourgeoisie, which had lost its markets and assets, and a demoralised and defeated armed forces. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, ruler of the new Pakistan, embodied this configuration, but was unique in that his strength lay in popular support received in the 1970 elections on the basis of a socialist ideology. Circumstances favoured his attempt to bridge the gap between power and legitimacy and to establish a political base independent of the state. But his solution, dictated by the interests he represented and the structure he inherited, was to personalise the state.

Dependence on the military was reduced by the expansion of the 'security branch' of the bureaucracy directly under his control. The 'civic' branch of the bureaucracy was turned into a personal instrument, its autonomy was destroyed and hence its ability to act as a counterbalance to the army.<sup>43</sup> Nationalisation of banking and industry enhanced Bhutto's power and control. At the same time, he individualised politics, destroyed his own party, suppressed those who

attempted to establish an independent political base and maintained a personal populist relationship with a restive and disillusioned people. In this bizarre caricature of Mughal 'despotism' he hoped to recreate the image that 'the king is good but his officials bad'. For this, he paid with his life at the hands of the present military junta, which, haunted by his populist ghost, has brought the crisis of legitimacy full circle. The present regime has nothing to offer but an obscurantist rehash of the 'Islamic state'.

The mediation of social conflict through a political democratic order has been made impossible; more and more, the ruling classes have had to rely on the repressive apparatuses of the state for maintaining social control.\* This has augmented the military authoritarian traditions and institutions inherited from British colonialism.

However, as the economic and political existence of the exploiting classes is derived from the state, the state is no longer capable of standing 'above society', an embodiment of the 'general' rather than a 'particular' interest. So class conflict comes to be drawn between the state and the large majority of the oppressed people. Since, in Pakistan, state power has a very narrow regional base, this conflict has often appeared in the form of challenges for regional autonomy – East Bengal in 1971 and Baluchistan and Sind today. As such struggles continue they may or may not produce a national movement for socialism – but they are likely to produce conflicts within the state which will crack it from the top.

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\*It should be added that the tendency towards authoritarian solutions has vastly increased through Pakistan's close military relationship with the US, which began in 1954. While a detailed study on this subject remains to be done, at least two effects are fairly evident: firstly, US military aid has increased the size, power and perquisites of the armed forces, making it a more powerful institution in relation to others. Second, US military training has imparted a technocratic, repressive predilection which underrates political solutions to social crisis.



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- 38 For the dominance of the Muslim League by the middle-class Muslims of the United Provinces, see K.B. Sayeed, *Pakistan, the Formative Phase, 1857-1947* (London, 1968), p. 206.

- 39 See, for example, B.N. Pandey, *The Break-up of British India* (London, 1969), p. 155.
- 40 W.C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India: a social analysis* (London, 1946), pp. 277-9.
- 41 R. Nations, op. cit., p. 5.
- 42 See, for example, Hamza Alavi, 'Elite Farmer Strategy' in Alavi et al, *Rural Development in Bangla Desh and Pakistan* (Hawaii, 1976).
- 43 See Eqbal Ahmad, 'Pakistan: signposts to a police state', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* (Vol. IV, no. 4, 1974).

# CAPITAL & CLASS

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## Social aspects of the Eritrean revolution\*

The long, difficult struggle of the Eritreans has remained largely ignored by public opinion, its social dimensions in particular – for what attention has been paid to it has been concentrated on its military aspects. But the struggle that is taking place in Eritrea today is one that can be situated within the great tradition of liberation movements such as those of China, Vietnam, Cuba, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. And the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), whose political line and practice have become the dominant feature of the struggle as a whole, has learnt and profited from those experiences. It has, in addition, devoted much attention to analysing the specificity of its own situation, so that, in the liberated zones under EPLF control, Eritrea is undergoing a profound social and structural transformation, in which the most important element is mass popular participation. However, in order to gain a deeper insight into the nature of this social revolution, it is necessary first to look briefly at the structure of traditional Eritrean society, and the effects on it of modern European colonialism.

### *The traditional society*

The traditional society was composed of settled agriculturalists in the highland regions and pastoral nomads or semi-nomads in the

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lowlands. The former were and, for the most part, still are organised in village communities composed of extended families. Traditionally, in most villages of highland Eritrea, there were three land-holding systems. Under *meriet risti*, or family ownership, only members of the family had the right to use their particular land, which could only be sold with the consent of the whole family. *Meriet worki*, or private ownership of land, also occasionally occurred. But by far the most prevalent system of land tenure was that of the *diesa*, communal or village ownership, with every member of the village having the same rights to use the land. The villagers fell into two categories: the *restegna* families, who were descended from the original inhabitants, and the *makalai ailet*, those who immigrated later. (Only the former had a say in the running of the village, which was administered by an assembly of elders representing the *restegna* families – commonly the richest families in the village.) *Diesa* land was divided into three categories, according to its fertility, and land from each was distributed among the members of the village every seven years. The land was then exploited individually and all the instruments of labour privately owned.

Rural highland Eritrea was relatively densely populated, agricultural land was and is extremely fragmented. Modern agricultural techniques (irrigation, fertilisation, etc.) are still non-existent. Most of the settled agriculturalists in the plateaux are Christians. The Coptic Church in fact owns a considerable amount of land in this part of the country.

Among the nomadic and semi-nomadic societies of various nationalities that inhabit the lowlands a typical feudal social structure has prevailed. For example, the largely nomadic Beni Amer society in the western lowlands was divided into two rigidly distinct social classes: a ruling aristocracy (the *Nabtabs*) and, the overwhelming majority, a caste of serfs (the *Tigres*). Among the Beni Amer the grazing lands occupied by the different groups were defined only by habit and tacit traditional agreements. The serfs had the right to own their own livestock, but were tied to the *Nabtabs* by a series of feudal obligations: tributary payments, regular compulsory gifts and *corvée* labour. These feudal obligations provided the overlord with a surplus income which he, in turn, used for his further enrichment. This economic cleavage was reinforced by the social and political class privileges of the *Nabtabs*. The serfs were totally excluded from all political life of the society, all 'menial' and 'unclean' labour was exclusively reserved to them and they were the victims of the social stigma attached to them.

### *Italian colonial domination*

Eritrea was Italy's first colony, annexed in 1889. Italy's aims were basically threefold: to make Eritrea a settler colony, a base for launching further conquests in the region and a market for Italy's manufactured goods.



Up to 1930 Italy's policy was to promote new settlement. A number of towns were built and some infrastructural projects undertaken: harbours, a system of roads and railroads linking the towns and criss-crossing the country. Industrial development was discouraged so as to make the colony dependent on Italian consumer and manufactured goods. Thus Italy poured capital into Eritrea for the infrastructure, for settlement purposes and for military reasons. These all entailed forced and salaried employment leading to the first emergence of a 'multi-national' Eritrean working class.

Between 1930 and 1941 colonial policy was heavily influenced by fascist Italy's expansionist designs in the region. The existing infrastructure was greatly expanded, new war-related projects were implemented, and massive public works were begun. What characterised this period was the spectacular growth of light industries and the rapid urbanisation of the population. (The European population, which numbered barely 5,000 before 1930, had increased to 50,000 by 1935.) By 1940, about 20 per cent of the entire Eritrean population was urbanised.

Meanwhile, the policy of settler colonisation had major repercussions in the rural areas. In the highlands, vast areas of the most fertile arable land were expropriated on various pretexts, and simply handed over to settlers for commercial farms. Land for pasture and cultivation was drastically reduced, and peasants in the already densely populated plateaux found it difficult to ensure their subsistence way of life. Farming lots that were already parcelised became more and more fragmented. Most of the Church land was confiscated by the colonial government. The same type of expropriation went on in the lowlands. Not only did a decree of 1909 render over 50 per cent of the country state land, but more land was reserved for colonists and other fertile areas, river courses, etc. were also decreed state land.

The Italian colonialists also broke up the socio-political set-up of the highland village communities. They appointed their nominees (mostly from the *restegna* families) as village headmen and chiefs in charge of sub-districts. This invested some individuals and families with political and administrative power which they eventually used as an instrument for their personal enrichment, and for obtaining possession of the land within the *diesa* land tenure system. Where feudal production prevailed, the colonialists openly supported the feudal class system. All the measures taken by the colonial government were aimed at reinforcing the exploitation of the serfs, whose living conditions consequently deteriorated rapidly.

Deprived of their land, vast numbers of peasants were forced to migrate to the colonial centres to live by selling their labour power. (Their only alternative was to serve as cannon fodder in the colonial army's wars of conquest — 60,000 Eritreans fought in Lybia alone.) In

the towns they were employed in the infrastructural and public works, light industries, commerce, distribution services and in the commercial farms. This working class, multinational in composition, developed a sharp sense of common identity in the course of its exploitation by Italian capital. Under Italian fascism, workers had no rights at all – the formation of associations and trade unions was illegal. The brutal oppression of the working class, coupled with an official ‘colour bar’, meant that its reaction to fascist policies could only be sporadic and unsustainable. In the rural areas the period was marked by a number of peasant uprisings and a general atmosphere of rebellion which forced the colonial government to give up a number of its settlement projects.

Migration to the towns began to affect the social structure of the village. Under the *diesa* system all those who left for the towns or joined the colonial army still retained their rights over the land. These absentee ‘users’ of land usually made arrangements with their relatives or others to cultivate their plots on their behalf. As a consequence, a number of farmers began to farm the plots allotted to them plus those of the absentees. Such a practice has been at the basis of the social and economic differentiation among the peasantry in rural Eritrea.

During the Italian occupation, there were practically no social services for the ‘indigenous’ population. Medical services were limited to the Italian settler colony and education was deliberately restricted. The confidential directives given to Italian headmasters by the Director of Education in Eritrea in 1938 speak for themselves: ‘By the end of the fourth year, the Eritrean student should be able to speak our language moderately well. He should know the four arithmetical operations within normal limits ... And in history he should know only the names of those who made Italy great.’ Nevertheless, a handful of Eritreans were trained to become interpreters, low level clerks and the like. These constituted a small intelligentsia, the nucleus of the future bureaucracy and of the petty bourgeois class in the country.

### *The British occupation*

The British occupied Eritrea in 1941. When they first attacked the Italian forces, they claimed to be the ‘liberators’ of the Eritrean people and at first won their whole-hearted support. But in practice they made no change in the socio-economic structure left by the Italians, and simply set out to exploit Eritrea’s military facilities and industrial establishment, its skilled labour and its resources, in order to supply the Allied Forces with consumer goods. In only three years, over 300 factories were set up. This period of British rule was characterised by the over-exploitation of the Eritrean working class and the accumulation of super-profits by British colonialism and Italian capital.

However, 1945 brought about a drastic change to British policy in Eritrea. The forced ‘boom’ came to a sudden halt. The British



post-war scheme for the partition of Eritrea (between Ethiopia and Sudan along ethnic and religious lines) depended in part on the economic non-viability of an independent Eritrea. As though to substantiate this argument the British started to destroy the Eritrean economy. Buildings and factories were dismantled and much industrial hardware and infrastructural equipment was transferred to other British colonies.

Inevitably, during the early period of British colonialism the size of the working class increased tremendously and there was a further drain of the rural population into the urban centres. Then, with the rapid shut-down of factories and the halt to infrastructural works, came mass unemployment. Unable to return to the countryside and faced with starvation, the working class began to rise up against British colonial rule. Organised in trade unions at factory level, workers began to wage struggles to improve their miserable living conditions.

The lot of the urban petty bourgeoisie was no better. Few in numbers at the start of the British occupation, its members had hoped to fill the posts vacated by the Italians – but they were to be disappointed, for the fascist political and administrative machinery simply remained. Under British rule, their numbers increased significantly, due to greater access to education – only to experience mass unemployment after the Second World War. Thus they too began to agitate against British rule.

The misery of life in the towns was paralleled by a major deterioration of living conditions in rural Eritrea. The British, carrying on Italian policies, expropriated vast areas of the most fertile land from the peasantry to give to Italian capitalist farmers. And they also greatly increased the taxes levied on the peasants. At the same time, as life in the towns became increasingly difficult, the workers began to depend on the countryside for help with food – and, by now, the veterans of the ex-colonial army had returned to the villages.

In the highlands, Eritrean peasants reacted vigorously against this state of affairs, especially over the expropriation of their land. They organised armed attacks on Italian farms, burning them to the ground, and killing their owners.

Meanwhile, a powerful anti-feudal movement swept through the lowlands (1942-9). The serfs, who constituted over 90 per cent of the population, openly revolted against their feudal landlords. Refusing to pay taxes and dues, they demanded complete emancipation. Although the serfs could not win total liberation, the movement seriously shook the economic and political base of the *Shumagles* (lowland chiefs) and the *Nabtabs*. Faced with such uprisings and social upheaval all over rural Eritrea, the colonial administration's response was to reinforce the political and administrative apparatus in the countryside.

The whole country was in ferment and all sections of society saw only one solution: independence. By this time, Eritreans of different

nationalities, ethnic groups and religions had begun to wage a common struggle based on their common exploitation and humiliation. But Britain, mindful of its scheme to partition Eritrea after the war, set out to destroy the common anti-colonial struggle by fomenting religious and national animosities. And Britain's interests were to coincide with those of Haile Selassie's feudal regime.

The end of British rule was characterised by intense political activity, most of which has hitherto only been analysed in religious or national terms. But a brief look at the social bases of some of the contending parties is required.

The Unionist Party, reportedly the party of the Christian and highland people of Eritrea, was in fact mainly the creation of the Ethiopian imperial regime. In order to promote a pro-Ethiopian public opinion, which did not exist of its own accord in Eritrea, the Ethiopian regime first turned to the Coptic Church. Previous demands that the British restore its land, confiscated by the Italians, had met with no success. When, therefore, the Ethiopian regime promised to return it if the two countries were united, the Church readily supported union. Once assured of the support of the Church, Haile Selassie's regime next turned to the higher sections of the petty bourgeoisie. These social groups, who had constituted the intelligentsia during Italian colonialism and whose hopes and ambitions had been frustrated by the British, were lured into the party with promises of jobs and status, and became its organisers and leaders. But, once their interests had been fulfilled through the federal set up, they fought against the Ethiopian regime's schemes of total annexation.

Another of the party's main bases was the feudal class, particularly the landed aristocrats of Muslim Eritrea, whose interests had been seriously threatened by the powerful emancipation movement of the serfs. Not surprisingly, these feudalists saw Ethiopia's feudal regime as a staunch protector of their interests – and it is the defence of such material interests that explains how a Muslim aristocracy came to be one of the major forces of a party instigated by the Coptic Church. This is not to say that the Unionist Party did not have a mass following. The Church's influence over the highland peasants was great and it did not hesitate to use the threat of excommunication against the advocates of independence.

The Muslim League and the Liberal Progressive Party were the main organisations fighting for independence. The Muslim League came out of the anti-feudal movement in the lowlands, whose calls for emancipation from serfdom and for national independence were inseparable. The League was founded and led by a bourgeois nationalist of serf origin, with great influence among the serfs. The Liberal Progressive Party, though it enjoyed the support of the urban proletariat, drew its membership from and was dominated by the lower petty



bourgeoisie and the urban intellectuals of the highlands.

### *Ethiopian colonialism*

The 'federation' with Ethiopia (which lasted from 1952 to 1962) was virtually imposed on Eritrea by a United Nations decision negating Eritrea's right to self-determination. The anomaly in the supposed co-existence of a nation which was struggling for democracy and autonomy with an autocratic and archaic Ethiopian regime soon became evident. In order to destroy the political life of Eritrea, the Ethiopian regime set out to cripple the economy of the country – by expropriating one of its major sources of revenue (its share of customs duties), by closing down several factories and dismantling and transferring them to Ethiopia, and by blocking industrial development generally. In addition, freedom of speech, of the press and of association was suppressed, journalists and intellectuals were imprisoned, the Eritrean Assembly was deprived of all its powers and the country's judicial system subverted. Amharic was forcibly imposed as the only and official language, books written in Tigrinya were burnt and the Eritrean national flag was lowered.

If these moves led to the impoverishment of the Eritrean working class on the one hand, they led on the other to an unprecedented growth in the workers' movement, and to the founding of the General Union of Labour Syndicates in 1952. The regime set out to destroy it. Government agents shot and wounded the Union's president, who had been a founder of the Liberal Progressive Party, and he was subsequently banished. The workers were prohibited from holding any meetings and the Union's newspaper was banned.

The movement went underground and, in alliance with Eritrean students, began a programme of mass agitation. By 1957 this had spread throughout the country, reaching its peak in the general strike of 1958. In massive demonstrations, workers, students and other sections of the population condemned economic plunder and openly demanded Eritrea's independence. The Ethiopian regime reacted by killing and wounding hundreds of demonstrators and imprisoning thousands more. After this bloody massacre, the students – who had fought strongly against the violation of national and democratic rights throughout the 1950s – played an active role in the clandestine organisation, *Mahber Showate*, formed for the purposes of armed struggle. But such massive repression proved a set-back to the workers' movement for many years to come, and accelerated the emigration of Eritrean workers overseas. Although Eritrean workers never ceased to support the independence struggle, as members or by raising funds, their movement was at a low ebb when the armed struggle began.

For the peasantry, Ethiopian rule meant the consolidation of feudalism where it had existed and its introduction into areas where it

had not, thereby increasing pauperisation.

As might be expected, however, the position of the upper petty bourgeoisie was consolidated by the regime which bestowed economic advantages and titles on its members. Through corruption and privilege they began to amass sizeable personal wealth. Landed property, formerly in the hands of the British colonial authority, was transferred to them, as were some businesses formerly owned by the Italians. With the financial wealth they accumulated, they started new businesses – factories, commercial and distribution firms, insurance and transport companies. They also occupied the high posts in the bureaucracy, the military and the police forces, which enabled them further to consolidate their economic and financial power.

As international capital began to make its way into the country, these upper echelons of the petty bourgeoisie became a solid and clearly delineated bourgeois class. The development of this bourgeoisie was not, of course, smooth and linear. The upper petty bourgeois unionists supporting the federal set up (as opposed to complete annexation) who were not bought off by the regime, were liquidated, forced to leave the country or obliged to distance themselves from the regime, and replaced by others more loyal and content with the financial benefits they were deriving from the system.

Feudal landlords were similarly rewarded by Haile Selassie's regime. The *Shumagles* and the *Nabtabs*, now more secure in their positions of privilege, were granted aristocratic titles and property. Many were appointed to high posts in the bureaucracy. In the Eritrean highlands, the loyalty of the feudal elements was rewarded by the strengthening of their political and administrative power. This enabled them not only to tamper with the *diesa* system and dominate commercial activities in the countryside, but also to develop business interests in the towns. This, in turn, led to more and more absentee landlords, both in the highlands and lowlands.

### **The impact of the liberation struggle on the structure of Eritrean society**

The liberation struggle has been defined by the EPLF as both a national and a social venture. It should be noted that this is the outcome of intense political struggles within the Eritrean liberation movement. The bitter debates that were waged within the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in the second half of the 1960s, and which culminated in the birth of the EPLF in 1970, revolved around the character, the objectives and the motive forces of the revolution. The elements in the ELF who were eventually to be found in the EPLF came to the conclusion that the only path to victory was to struggle on two fronts: for national independence and for the profound democratic transformation



of society. According to the analysis made by the EPLF, these two phases of the liberation struggle are so closely interwoven that it is impossible to separate one from the other. The popular aspirations for independence could not be fulfilled unless, in the course of the liberation struggle, the exploitative structures of society were transformed in favour of the basic interests of the majority of the people; correspondingly, it was futile to think of meeting the basic demands of the masses, the main force of the revolution, outside the context of an independent Eritrea.

There are three factors which should be mentioned in any discussion of the liberation movement. Firstly, imperialist and neo-colonial policies were not only the causes of the struggle for national liberation, but were also the forces that persisted in negating Eritrea's right to self-determination – either by their direct participation in the repression of the struggle or by their open hostility, indifference or attempts to turn it to their own use. Second, by virtue of its feudal and totally dependent nature, the enemy that confronted the Eritrean fighters was backward, brutal and bankrupt of any solutions to Eritrean problems. Third, one must note the grave errors, defects and failures of the first years of the armed struggle. At this period, despite popular support, the leadership of the liberation movement was dominated by feudal elements, who sought to gain independence by a quick route and in the shortest span of time. However, the contradictions within the ELF and Eritrean political and socio-economic conditions, as well as the world situation, did not allow the liberation struggle any choice but that of a strategy of a protracted people's war as the only path towards revolution. This was the analysis of the founders of the EPLF and it was adopted as the new political line of the organisation.

In breaking away from the ELF, the EPLF saw it as fundamental to define existing social contradictions. It found that the main cause of the setbacks suffered by the liberation struggle under the leadership of the ELF was a lack of analysis of Eritrean society, its various classes and their attitude towards the revolution. Through detailed investigation, therefore, the EPLF has identified those classes which are the targets of the struggle and those which are the forces of transformation.

### *The social targets of the revolution*

In 1975, the EPLF published the results of an investigation that it had conducted into the class structure of the rural highlands. In these areas the feudal class owns extensive land and various types of farm implements. A feudal landlord is one who owns more than eight *tsimdi*\* of land and more than four pairs of oxen. He does not participate in

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\*The amount of land a pair of oxen can plough in one day under normal conditions.

production, but exploits the labour of several tenants and generally receives 25-50 per cent of the product, as well as exacting various unpaid services and payments. Usury is a common practice of the feudalists. By lending at very high rates to the poverty stricken peasants, they derive substantial income. In lowland Eritrea, tenants have been similarly exploited. The feudal class monopolises the economic and commercial life of the rural areas; historically it has always been linked with Italian and British colonialism, and its position was greatly consolidated by the Ethiopian feudal regime. It is a major target of the revolution.

The other main target is the upper section of the bourgeoisie, discussed earlier. According to the EPLF this is composed of the comprador bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic capitalists. As in all neo-colonial countries, it serves as an agent of international capital, heading the import-export trade, financial institutions and industrial and agricultural concerns. It has always actively opposed Eritrea's independence struggle. As for the national bourgeoisie, small and lacking influence, the history of the struggle shows that a minority has given wavering support to the movement while the majority has remained neutral. Consequently, the EPLF takes a prudent stance towards it.

### *The motive forces of the revolution*

With the formation of the EPLF, the worker-peasant alliance was defined as 'the basis of the Eritrean revolution' and the working class, being in the best objective conditions to generate a social consciousness, as 'the vanguard of the revolution'. Compared to the peasantry, the Eritrean working class is very small. It is composed of the industrial and agricultural proletariat. Inside Eritrea, the former are in manufacturing industry, construction, communications and the service industries. The latter are mostly in the big plantations run by foreign capital. The wages and working conditions in Eritrea are as low as in other economically dependent countries. And similarly, the majority of the Eritrean workers are of peasant origin and maintain close ties with the countryside. This is seen as a positive factor for the forging of the worker-peasant alliance.

The peasantry (settled agriculturists, nomads and semi-nomads) constitutes the main base of the revolution. Besides being the overwhelming majority of the population, it is the most exploited class; its members lead a wretched life and are consequently the most reliable allies of the working class. The peasantry is, however, not a homogenous entity. Through the investigation of highland society it was established that the most numerous are the poor peasantry, about 60 per cent of the total. Some of these, in addition to their own labour power, possess one ox and a small plot of land. As far as possible they



avoid renting oxen from feudalists and rich peasants (who demand produce in return) by lending the oxen among themselves. Those without any oxen, but with their own labour power, a small plot and some farm implements, have to rent oxen from landlords and rich peasants. There are yet others, including old people, orphans, and widowed or divorced women, who have nothing except a small plot of land. Unable to work it themselves, they are obliged to rent it out to people who can farm it. Depending on the arrangement, they receive a third or half of the meagre produce. Finally, there are those who own nothing but their labour power: the young or unmarried, the newly married or those who reside in the village but are not the original members of the community. To eke out a living, they either have to rent land or sell their labour to the rich peasants or the feudalists.

It is not difficult to see that the life led by the poor peasants is one of abject misery. Their farm produce cannot last them the year, so they become the victims of usury and other forms of exploitation. To ensure their survival, they look for jobs in towns and plantations during certain periods of the year. Since they have nothing to lose, they constitute a strong base for the liberation struggle. Poor peasants are the first to demand land reform and to defend it tenaciously.

The middle peasants are the next most important group, constituting about 30 per cent of the peasantry. A middle peasant is one who owns eight *tsimdi* of land, a pair of oxen and a few domestic animals. He participates in production. As a whole, the middle peasants do not hire farm labour. Although they are not obliged to migrate to the urban centres during the off-seasons, they make but a subsistence livelihood. They can see that their interests will be better served with the success of the revolution, and participate in it, particularly when it scores successes. The EPLF believes that the middle peasantry is an important force and that the revolution has to bid for its support by carrying out the careful work of consciousness raising and politicisation.

A rich peasant is one who owns more than eight *tsimdi* of land, over two pairs of oxen and better farm implements. He farms the land that he owns or rents himself, but, in addition, hires farm labour or rents part of his land or implements to poor peasants. Rich peasants lend out money at high rates of interest. They dominate the administration of community affairs. This enables them to accumulate surplus, which in turn enables them materially to improve their land. As a whole, according to the analysis of the EPLF, the rich peasantry is and can be patriotic in its attitude. However, a thoroughgoing social revolution and eventual change in the structure of the society is objectively a threat to its privileges. For this reason, its support is not consistent. The EPLF recognises the need to pursue a prudent policy in dealing with the rich peasantry.

Last but not least of the rural classes are the nomadic and

semi-nomadic populations in the lowlands of Eritrea. Numerically a very important section of the rural population, the nomads are not only among the most exploited but are, in addition, the most neglected group in Eritrean rural society. The pastoral semi-nomadic people are forced to rent land for grazing and cultivation from the feudalists or the Ethiopian regime. Heavy taxes are levied upon them. In addition, the landlords exact various services from them (*corvée* labour, tribute payments, etc.). A strong force for the revolution, they have supported the armed struggle from the very beginning and thus have suffered heavily from the repression of the Ethiopian regime.

Finally, the role of the urban petty bourgeoisie should be stressed. Constituting an estimated 20 per cent of the population, it is the largest section of the urban population and it includes the small traders, small-scale manufacturers, the intelligentsia (intellectuals, teachers and students), lower government officials, office clerks, lower army and police officers. Apart from a thin stratum which is either neutral or allied to the Ethiopian regime, this class has played a highly active and important role in the independence movement in general and in the armed struggle in particular. But the EPLF is aware of the dangers if this class comes to dominate the struggle. It holds that although this class is a reliable ally of the oppressed masses, the revolution can only achieve its real aims by being solidly based in the worker-peasant alliance, under the direction of the working class.

#### *Land reform and social transformation in the countryside*

Before proceeding any further we should remember the conditions under which the EPLF began to carry out its work among the people. The difficult years following its formation and the outbreak of the civil war in 1972 did not allow the EPLF to implement its political line effectively, and in general it was not until the end of 1974 that the mobilisation of the masses could be undertaken. The experiences documented here date from that time and come out of extremely difficult military and political situations. Land reform by itself does not necessarily imply the profound transformation (in a socialist sense) of production or class relations. In the liberated areas of Eritrea, it should not only be seen in the context of the overall revolutionary situation, but also be examined in its specifics for an understanding of its direct effects on the social situation. The following case studies of land reform relate to two village communities of the highlands, Azien and Medri-Zien, and to Afaabet, a small town in the northern lowlands of Eritrea.

*Azien:* Azien is a typical village of the Eritrean plateau, situated a few kilometres north of Asmara. A medium sized village, its landholding system is that of *diesa*. But, like most villages in this area, Azien underwent the social process described above, whereby feudal elements,



using the political power given to them and consolidated by successive colonialists, had prevented the *diesa* system from functioning. By 1975, thirty-eight years had elapsed since the last redistribution of land, which should take place every seven years, and large tracts of land had virtually become the private property of the landlords and rich peasants. Communal village ownership had turned into almost de facto private ownership. Landless and poor peasants had increased in numbers till they became the overwhelming majority of the peasants. Throughout these thirty-eight years, they had continuously demanded the application of the *diesa* system, but at the local level, their demands were blocked by those who monopolised economic and political power, and at the higher level, their demands were simply dismissed as illegitimate.

By the time the EPLF forces arrived in Azien (towards the end of 1974) the peasants were ready to do away with the existing order, but the land reform was not carried out until a year later. For the EPLF, liberating a zone does not simply mean driving out the enemy from a given part of the country. Before launching a military operation, it makes a detailed study of the historical, political and socio-economic conditions of the zone and makes the necessary preparations for its later organisation. At the end of the battle the EPLF brings into the zone units responsible for education, health, and so on, together with fighters of the people's army to defend the liberated zone from further enemy attack.

In Azien, armed propaganda units first set out to prepare the ground. As an initial step they made a careful study not only of the general socio-economic conditions of the village, but also of the socio-economic status of each peasant household. These studies form the basis upon which the EPLF identifies the poor peasants, in particular, in order to organise them into secret cells so that they can ultimately undertake the struggle for social transformation themselves. The propaganda unit cadres also call a series of meetings for all the villagers, and there they give a comprehensive political education, ranging from Eritrea's history to the aims of the present revolution. Additional private contacts and discussions are made with poor and middle peasants. In this way, the most receptive peasants are recruited into secret cells of up to fifteen members.

At this stage the only way to break up the feudal type of production relations that had been established in the Eritrean highlands is to return to strict observation of the *diesa*, a tradition which more or less assures the socialisation of the ownership of land. But before this can be proposed, steps have to be taken to change the power relationships in the village assembly, for it is the assembly which is responsible for the redistribution of land. And, as the class composition of the leadership in the rural highlands changed, the village assemblies became the

preserve of the landlords and the rich peasants. Redistribution of land, therefore, usually begins with the agitation of the organised peasants for new elections to the village assemblies.

It should be noted here that for the first time in the history of rural Eritrea women have begun to participate in the political life of the village communities (assemblies, elections, redistribution of land, etc.). Women's clandestine cells are also set up and their members play an important part in the process of the social transformation of village life. The general political mobilisation of the village, together with the active participation of the members of the cells of the poor peasants and women, shows in the results of the new elections. Members of sections of the peasantry who, either for economic reasons (poor and landless peasants) or socio-historical ones (the families of the non-original inhabitants), were hitherto excluded from posts of responsibility in the village assemblies now gain political and administrative power.

Azien underwent this process. By the end of November 1975, there were six clandestine cells, composed of seventy members, the majority of them landless and poor peasants. Through their efforts, along with those of the EPLF's cadres, a new leading body, the majority made up of organised peasants, was elected to run village affairs. Subsequently, the question of redistribution of land was brought up in public debates attended by over 1,200 peasants. It got their overwhelming support. Another committee of nine members was then elected to do the ground work – this after 38 years – for the redistribution of land. Out of the 5,000 inhabitants, it was found that 1,500 households were eligible for participation in the redistribution.

*Medri-Zien:* The Coptic Church has always been a feudal institution in rural Eritrea and the Debre-Sina monastery was no exception. It owned almost all the land of the nearby village of Medri-Zien, with its 500 peasant households. The peasants, who worked for the monastery as tenants, keeping only one-third of their crop, had long demanded collective ownership of the land. When this ongoing conflict broke out at times into violent clashes, the monastery would call in the Ethiopian army. As the conflict sharpened, the EPLF launched a campaign in favour of the tenants' demands. Cells of the Peasant Association were formed in Medri-Zien and a village assembly was established. Soon the whole region became involved in the struggle. The Church tried to arouse public opinion against the EPLF by branding it as anti-religious, but to no avail. The tenants of Medri-Zien, supported by peasants throughout the region and by the EPLF, were so firm in their demands that the monks themselves became divided, gradually leading to the isolation of the chief monks. The monastery had to give up and today the land of Medri-Zien is under the *diesa* system.



What should be added here is that while basing the land reform on the traditional land tenure system, the EPLF has modified it so as to give it a new democratic content. Previously, only the family household participated in the redistribution of the land. Now the members of the village get their plot of land as individuals. This enables the unmarried and the women (who constitute a large percentage of the landless) to have their own plots. Formerly, members of the village who migrated to urban centres retained their rights over the use of land, leaving their share to be cultivated by the rich peasants and the landlords. In the new redistribution no plots are allocated for absentee members of the village, unless they depend heavily for their living on the produce.

*Afaabet:* Afaabet, in the northern lowland province of Sahel, has a Muslim population and a clan-based social organisation. When the EPLF brought the area under its control in 1977, it found a sharply divided society, with landless peasants and tenants working for a handful of landlords, and with various types of injustices, including the extreme oppression of women. Consequently, the EPLF began to mobilise and organise among the exploited and oppressed peasants.

The feudalists fought back hard. Realising that the establishment of a People's Assembly meant the transfer of political power, they attempted to infiltrate it and bring it under their control – unsuccessfully. Their fear and determination increased when the slogan 'land to the tiller' was adopted and the People's Assembly confiscated the land of a big landlord, redistributing it to all forty-five of his former tenants.

In the face of this popular militancy the feudalists reverted to traditional clan sentiments and religion in an attempt to stem the growing revolutionary tide. They claimed that land redistribution favoured certain clans against others, that the dispossession of certain members of a clan was a hostile act to the whole clan. They attacked the legitimacy of the People's Assembly, mainly on the grounds that it included women representatives. To do this, they used religion, which in the traditional society regulated the place of women. They used the Mosque of Afaabet as the centre of their agitation, culminating in the organisation of a demonstration in May 1978. The inhabitants of the town and the surrounding district straightaway began to mobilise in response. A few days later, a general assembly was convened where people reaffirmed their support for the economic and social measures that were being taken and their intention to continue fighting for the gains of the revolution. The assembly named five landlords as the main instigators of the counter-attack and decided that they be brought before the Justice Committee of the People's Assembly.

A final example of the drastic measures land reform sometimes involves is offered by the village of Zager, where ninety plots of land,

belonging to absentee landlords and collaborators with the regime, were expropriated and given to the village to be farmed collectively.

The redistribution of land, combined with the EPLF's strict ban on usury and its control over the commercial activities in the liberated zones, means that the feudalists and the rich peasants are deprived of their main sources of economic and financial power. But the new beneficiaries of land reform still need farm implements and draught animals – one of the principal causes of class differentiation in rural Eritrea. What is more, despite the effect of land reform in democratising rural life, land for cultivation still remains extremely fragmented. The methods of agriculture are still backward and productivity low. Thus the EPLF is firm in its conviction that though the present land reform is a basic first step, the transformation of society cannot be completed without the beginning of collective farming. To this end, it has undertaken a vast educational programme. The people's army helps the peasants in their work and assists them to adopt modern methods of farming. Some of the small nationalised commercial farms are run on this basis.

The EPLF has also nationalised big mechanised farms and plantations, formerly in the hands of the Ethiopian regime, foreign capitalists and Eritrean collaborators. For the time being, these farms are run by the EPLF to meet the organisation's food requirements and also as centres of agricultural experimentation.

### *The new urban organisation*

In 1977 the EPLF liberated several important Eritrean towns. As in the countryside, this was preceded by a study of their socio-economic and political conditions and by the building of secret cells. Following liberation, priority was given to the mobilisation and organisation of the residents into mass organisations according to the social class or group to which they belonged: workers, small traders and merchants, women, youth and others. Keren, the second largest Eritrean city, was a major testing ground for the EPLF.

The most urgent task was its reconstruction and the improvement of living conditions. In concrete terms, this included maintaining the water supply, supplying residents with essential commodities and ensuring adequate supplies of fuel for transport and power installations. Despite enormous difficulties and the Ethiopian army's constant bombing of the city, the EPLF managed to get some factories going (the fighters joined the workers to run them), as well as health centres and schools. During the month following the liberation of Keren, EPLF teams worked throughout the city to repair the damage done in the fighting. Electricity was turned back on, telephone services restored and emergency food rations were distributed. Eritrean families from towns under Ethiopian occupation flowed into Keren and the city



grew rapidly. The EPLF took under its direct control all the economic and financial establishments and the property that had been nationalised by the present Ethiopian regime instead of – as had the ELF – restoring this property to its former owners. It increased workers' wages and established a policy of low prices for goods in circulation in the city. It set a profit rate of 10 per cent for the big merchants and also created a chain of cooperative stores where food prices were about 30 per cent less than in private shops. The aim of this policy was not only to ameliorate living conditions for the city's residents, but also to combat profiteering and speculation and prevent small-scale private producers from accumulating wealth.

The months following Keren's liberation were characterised by intense political agitation. Rallies attended by thousands of people were held and various mass organisations were formed. After studying alternative systems, the EPLF adopted what it called the 'popular self-government system'. Keren was divided into six districts, each having five mass associations: a Workers' Association, a Peasant Association, a Petty Bourgeois Association, a Women's Association, and a Youth Association (16-25 years). Each association works through a network of cells, with up to sixty members in a cell. Through a series of elections (at every level) representatives from these organisations form the People's Assembly whose executive committee (with twelve members) is the highest local authority, in charge of civil justice, economic affairs, security and public order.

However, despite the fact that the EPLF now controls a number of towns, an important majority of the working class in Eritrea is in the cities under enemy occupation, where they are organised in clandestine cells in the factories, economic and financial enterprises, etc. It is common knowledge, for example, that the material necessary for running the EPLF's handicraft industries and mechanised farms in the liberated areas has been obtained in frequent raids on these cities, made with the close collaboration of the organised workers. The EPLF has also done significant work mobilising and organising immigrant Eritrean workers in foreign countries. Besides their political activities, the Workers' Associations outside Eritrea give considerable material support to the Front.

The EPLF makes considerable efforts to disseminate a working-class ideology. It attaches great importance to the recruitment of workers. Besides their participation in all the activities of the EPLF, the part played by the worker-fighters in the organisation's economic activities (various workshops, transportation, construction, arms and electronic repair, etc.) should be stressed. As to the leadership role of the working class, among the fighters and the members of the mass organisations that go to the cadre school, priority is given to those of working-class origin.

*The liberation struggle's effects on education and health*

According to some estimates, more than 80 per cent of the population was illiterate when the liberation struggle began, although colonialism had created a tiny minority of intellectuals in the cities and some skilled people in trades. Literacy teaching is always accompanied by social and political training – for instance, booklets have been published in Tigrinya about the agrarian question, social classes in Eritrean society and the role of women. To be accepted into the school for cadres, it is not necessary to be literate. The fighters receive six months training, which is not only military, but also cultural and professional.

In the villages under the control of the EPLF, schools have been organised, as well as adult education, with the collaboration of teachers recruited from among the intellectuals. By 1977-78 there were 150 schools, 90 per cent of which were elementary schools located in the rural areas, mainly attended by the sons and daughters of peasants and nomads. Sometimes the children only come to school at night, because they have to tend animals during the day, or because of the dangers of the war. In one village a school of more than 1,000 children has been organised on an experimental basis, oriented to sciences, history and languages. The teaching methods stress creativity and the value of work. The language question, which is very important, has taken on a new dimension. During the British period there were schools in Tigrinya for Christians and in Arabic for Muslims. The Ethiopians imposed the Amharic language. Now three languages, Tigrinya, Arabic and Tigre, are used.

Under colonialism, what medical services there were, were concentrated in the cities; almost nothing was done in the countryside. The EPLF began by training 'squad doctors' (barefoot doctors) who are attached to clinics and in charge of the villages. Each one visits twenty to thirty villages a month and tries to meet the immediate needs encountered in the field, such as giving injections, treating wounds, advising on hygiene, giving vaccinations, and so forth. In 1975, 20,000 people were vaccinated against smallpox and the following year the target reached was 100,000. Some 'squad doctors' are in charge of all the villages within a radius of fifty kilometres. According to the latest information, there are about twenty medical doctors, seventy nurses and fifteen pharmacists for the whole of the liberated zones under EPLF control. The type of diseases encountered are classically those of underdeveloped countries: tuberculosis, malaria, kwashiorkor, filariasis, etc. Of course, the war has greatly aggravated these problems. Many people have been wounded and prisoners have to be cared for, so military units are also in charge of some of the health activities.

*The liberation struggle and women in Eritrean society*

Traditionally, women in rural Eritrea were excluded from ownership



of any means of production and were either excluded from social production or played a role secondary to that of men. In the highlands of Eritrea, for example, women were generally excluded from any direct ownership of land. However, having spent the day doing heavy work on the farms alongside their husband and/or parents, they would then go home ahead of the men to begin another cycle of domestic work. In the lowlands, women were confined to the inner parts of the houses so that no man could see them. In the urban areas, there was a small percentage of women who worked in the factories; employed as cheap labour they were the most exploited members of the working class. Nor did women have any place in political and social life. In the highlands, for instance, women were not allowed to attend the village assembly. In the patriarchal and semi-feudal society, marriages, influenced by economic considerations, were arranged. In rural Eritrea, child marriages were prevalent and divorce the man's prerogative.

But what are the changes that are taking place? Land reform has already been described. The EPLF believes that with its implementation one of the major causes of women's oppression, exclusion from land ownership, will gradually be abolished. Women have begun to participate actively in the village assemblies and in all the social and political activities of the village communities. In the liberated towns, women, through their mass association, have access to the highest responsibilities in the system of self-government. Since 95 per cent of Eritrean women are illiterate, the efforts to combat illiteracy constitute an important factor in the emancipation of women. The marriage legislation that the EPLF promulgated in 1978 abolished forced and child marriages in the liberated zones, and divorce no longer only depends upon the will and whims of the man.

The EPLF believes that these changes will be reinforced by the struggle that is waged to abolish prejudices against women in the society. Such prejudices have already been shaken by the impressive participation of women in the armed struggle. Today, not less than 20 per cent of the EPLF fighters are women. Women fighters are also engaged in agriculture and in handicraft industries. They work in machine shops, electrical shops, weapon repair shops – no job is considered solely for men. The EPLF is always adding to the number of women leaders and improving their qualities of leadership – not least by giving them priority in the cadre school. At the First Congress of the EPLF, 11 per cent of the delegates were women. One of the most active mass associations of the EPLF is in fact the Women's Association.

The emancipation of women helps to break up the foundations of a backward society. It is an important factor in the development of the productive forces of the country. The EPLF is conscious of the fact that what has been done so far is by no means sufficient. Emancipation of women is a long process which requires the total liberation of the society.

# The Foundation for Education with Production

A new international foundation, based in Zimbabwe, has been set up to encourage the development of new types of education to meet the needs of the Third World. It will work initially in Southern Africa; activities will later be extended to other regions of the Third World, and it is also hoped to help stimulate educational innovation in the industrialised countries.

The Foundation believes that education is never neutral: it either reproduces existing society with its inequalities and hierarchies or contributes to changing it. Conventional education is not only unsuitable for the Third World, but also for the developed countries as well. The inherent elitism of the system, the division between manual and mental work, the rigidity and abstraction of the contents, the authoritarian learning methods fail to meet the needs of the masses of the people. But mass-based pedagogy, linking learning with productive work, and relating it to the needs of the community, can make education a force of social transformation. Thus the industrialized countries could today learn a lot from the new forms of education being introduced in the Third World.

A conference on **Education and Productive Work**, is to be held in Bristol from May 1-3 1981. Details from Elisabeth Bird, Extra-mural Dept., Bristol University, 32 Tyndalls Park Road, Bristol BS8 1HR.

If you wish to support the work of the foundation, find out more about it, read its publications, write to:

**Foundation for Education with Production**  
P.O. Box UA 315, Salisbury, Zimbabwe



BERCH BERBEROGLU

# Turkey: the crisis of the neo-colonial system\*

## Historical background

The beginnings of imperialist penetration of Turkey go back to the final decades of Ottoman rule in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since the mid-1880s British, French, German and other European capital had made inroads into the Ottoman empire. Functioning as a neo-colony of European finance capital, the declining Ottoman state came to be known as the 'sick man of Europe', defenceless against outright partition and plunder. This enabled the European capitalist powers to intervene in Turkey during the First World War, when large territories of the Ottoman empire, extending from distant points in north Africa and the Persian Gulf to the depths of the Arabian peninsula, were annexed and brought under European colonial rule. The only major resistance against European imperialism during and after the war was in Anatolia, the territory encompassing modern Turkey. The Turkish national liberation movement engaged in long battles on many fronts against the invading enemy forces. The war of liberation ended in the early 1920s when victory came to the nationalist forces, led by Mustafa Kemal.

Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and after several years of struggle to stabilise the economic situation in the

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country, the petty-bourgeois, Kemalist forces began to build the basis of a state-capitalist economy during the 1930s. Under the leadership and control of the rising national and petty bourgeoisies, the state's resources were directed towards the development of an industrial economy that would open the path to an 'independent' national capitalism. Throughout this period, Turkey's economic position improved substantially – foreign firms were nationalised, capital goods-producing manufacturing industries were set up and efforts were made to mechanise the agricultural sector. The balance of trade improved, registering a surplus each year for fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> Class contradictions and class struggles under the state-capitalist regime, however, continued to intensify during this period and, with the state's failure to eliminate or neutralise the power of landlords and compradors, led to the restoration of neo-colonialism after the Second World War.

As the influence and control of Europe over Turkey weakened during the war years and in the post-war period, the path was opened for US penetration and control of the country, not only for the plunder of its wealth and resources by US transnational monopolies, but also, perhaps more significantly, for the use of its territory for military/strategic purposes – as part of America's aggressive posture against the Soviet Union, as well as its expansionist designs in the entire Middle East region. The process was facilitated by the 'Truman Doctrine' and later by the NATO and CENTO military pacts in which Turkey became a participant.\*

Turkey's new neo-colonial role during the 1950s was temporarily disrupted by the military coup in May 1960, but its dependent relationship with the US continued during the years of military rule and coalition governments throughout the 1960s. The landlord-comprador interests, the dominant force during the 1950s, had quickly recovered from the temporary setbacks of the early 1960s and re-established themselves in national politics by the middle of the decade. The process of externally controlled dependent industrialisation, which had begun to unfold during the 1950s, further expanded and became dominant during the 1960s. Along with this, the denationalisation of the Turkish economy continued as state enterprises set up during the 1930's were

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\*The 'Truman Doctrine', signed into law in mid-1947 and designed to secure US military interests, was directed specifically at Greece and Turkey. The initial \$100 million of military 'aid' to Turkey in 1948 reached \$687 million by 1952 – total US 'aid' to Turkey between 1948 and 1952 came to over \$1 billion. Turkey's ties to the US were strengthened through its membership in NATO (1952) and CENTO (1955). Originally referred to as the Baghdad Pact, the regional military alliance between Turkey, Iran and Iraq, as well as Britain and the US, was renamed the Central Treaty Organisation after Iraq withdrew in 1959. Together with new Pakistani membership, the Alliance continued to operate as the Middle Eastern wing of NATO throughout the 1960s and 1970s, till its collapse in 1979-80.



transferred to foreign and local private hands. Through joint ventures between foreign transnationals and local private capital, a large section of the national industrial bourgeoisie was integrated into the dependent economy, thus transforming a section of the traditional comprador bourgeoisie into a dependent industrial capitalist class with direct ties to metropolitan transnational monopolies. In effect, the Turkish economy had become an appendage of the US-controlled world economy.

### The setting for the current crisis

The economic and socio-political crises of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which led to a renewed crisis of the state in Turkey, were in effect a new phase in the prolonged crisis of this neo-colonial system.

The domination during this period of so-called 'yellow' trade-unionism, organised under the class-collaborationist Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions, *Türk İs*, had blocked and misdirected working-class struggles, channelling them into narrow economic concerns. Connected with the AFL-CIO and the CIA,<sup>2</sup> *Türk İs* had no real intention of struggling to secure even the most elementary of workers' rights — the right to strike. But in the 1960s, a number of independent unions and workers' organisations, among them the Istanbul Trade Union Association, the Mine Workers' Union, and the Workers' Party of Turkey (WPT), made important contributions to the workers' cause. Founded in 1961 by twelve independent trade unionists, the WPT played a key role in numerous important strikes and demonstrations. With the Communist Party of Turkey banned, the WPT was the only legal organised left force in the country at the time.\* Despite the reformist aspects of its politics, the WPT was instrumental in advancing working-class interests, and the fight it initiated against *Türk-İs* resulted in the establishment in 1967 of the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (*Devrimci İsci Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* or DISK). Founded by unions associated with the WPT (such as the Mine Workers' Union, the Tyre Workers' Union and the Chemical Workers' Union), DISK became a rallying point for class-conscious workers and trade unionists and progressive organisations throughout Turkey. Its establishment as a politically mature workers' organisation signalled the beginning of a new stage in the labour movement and raised the class struggle to a new level.

in 1968, 1,800 workers of the Derby rubber factory carried out the

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\*In this context, we should also mention the existence during this period of a radical left-wing grouping of intellectuals, called the *Yön* group, who viewed themselves as 'the true representatives of the Kemalist cause' — anti-imperialism, nationalism and state-directed social and economic development — and formed into an opposition force against the conservative forces in the country, including the Republican People's Party.

first factory occupation in Turkey. Strike activity intensified – the number of industrial strikes increased from fifty-four in 1968, to eighty-one in 1969 and 112 in 1970. The number of workers involved in these strikes increased from over 5,000 in 1968, to 15,000 in 1969 and over 21,000 in 1970.<sup>3</sup> On 15-16 June 1970, more than 100,000 workers in 135 factories throughout Istanbul and Kocaeli stopped work in protest against an attempt to weaken the movement by amending the law governing trade unions. In the demonstrations that followed, bloody clashes took place between the workers and the army and police throughout Istanbul. The right-wing government of Suleyman Demirel only managed to control the situation by declaring martial law.

On 12 March 1971, the generals moved in to take full control of the state apparatus.<sup>4</sup> In late April martial law was declared in eleven strategic provinces – including the eight most industrialised, where DISK was strongest, and three rural provinces with a large Kurdish population. As a result, strikes and demonstrations were outlawed, left-wing political organisations and publications were banned, liberal and progressive newspapers were closed down and journalists associated with them were prosecuted. Thousands of trade unionists, students and teachers were detained, while all students' and teachers' unions were banned and their leaders imprisoned. In an attempt to silence opposition and to consolidate military rule, a large number of constitutional amendments were passed to restrict or abolish basic rights, such as the freedom of speech and of assembly and the right to form trade unions. Then, in early 1972, a new phase of military repression began with an operation code-named *Tornado 1*, in which over 80,000 troops and police terrorised Istanbul, searching more than half a million houses, offices and workshops. Again, thousands of progressive students, teachers, lawyers, journalists and trade unionists were arrested, imprisoned and tortured.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, under the guise of preparing the nation for elections, the generals attempted to legitimise the regime through further amendments to the Constitution.

Between 1973 and 1979 Turkey went through a succession of unstable and precarious coalition governments, led alternately by the reactionary Justice Party (JP) and the 'social-democratic' Republican People's party (RPP), based on an alliance with an assortment of right-wing parties. In early 1974 the RPP, led by Bülent Ecevit, formed a coalition government with the Islamic-reactionary National Salvation Party (NSP). But this unstable coalition lasted only until September of that year. The coalition government that then emerged was a Nationalist Front coalition, formed by an alliance of four right-wing parties – the JP, NSP, RRP (Republican Reliance Party) and NAP (National Action Party) – under the leadership of Demirel. (The NAP, it should be noted, is one of the largest fascist organisations in Europe. Its leader, Türkeş, had close links with Nazi leaders in Germany. Its



armed gangs, the Grey Wolves, recruited from unemployed youth and operating on a similar basis to Hitler's brown shirts, attack the left and workers' organisations.) This coalition remained in power until the elections in June 1977, during which time the state was made to serve the interests of the ultra-right. The JP had a free hand in utilising the state sector to expand the interests of the compradors, while the NAP, through the vice-premiership of Turkes, obtained key positions within the state apparatus, especially in the secret service, police and armed forces. The economic policies of the 'Nationalist Front' government, which were designed to serve the short-term interests of the comprador capitalists, led Turkey into a deeper economic crisis which was to bring the country to the brink of bankruptcy.

The effects of the government's policies began to be felt by 1977, and conflicts developed within and between the 'Nationalist Front' parties over these policies. Thus, the second 'Nationalist Front' government, which came to power following the June 1977 elections, survived only until the end of the year. In January 1978, Ecevit, with support from independents, formed a new, RPP-led government. While this meant the end of right-wing coalition governments for the time being, it did not signal a major reversal of trends in the economy. The economic situation worsened throughout 1978 and 1979, and when, in October 1979, the RPP failed to secure the necessary seats in parliamentary by-elections, thus losing its majority, Ecevit and his cabinet resigned. Once again, Demirel was asked to form a new government, and by the end of 1979 a JP-led right-wing government had been formed.

In all, the coalition governments formed during the period 1973-80 numbered thirteen, and none of them was able to resolve the mounting economic problems which had brought Turkey to the brink of a major collapse, and which had at the same time led to increased unrest and militancy among the masses. This, as on two previous occasions, was to reach explosive proportions by the end of the 1970s. Before examining the class struggles of this period, however, it is necessary to take a closer look at the economic situation.

### **The Turkish economy in crisis: 1970-80**

The 1971 military intervention took place in response to the faltering economy and the mass strikes and demonstrations which followed. But the generals had an added interest in preserving the neo-colonial status quo. Since the early 1960s, the armed forces had, through the establishment of the Army Mutual Assistance Association (*Ordu Yardimlasma Kurumu*, OYAK), emerged as one of the largest industrial and commercial interests in Turkey and become an integral part of the economy.<sup>6</sup> By the early 1970s, OYAK had acquired controlling interests in the Turkish Automotive Industry (which assembles

International Harvester trucks and tractors), an insurance company, a food-canning firm and a cement plant. It also held 42 per cent of the shares of Renault's Turkish subsidiary OYAK-Renault, 20 per cent of the Petkim Petrochemical plant, 8 per cent of the state-owned Turkish Petroleum corporation and 7 per cent of the Turkish subsidiary of the Goodyear Tire Company, among others. Thus, while it had started with an initial investment of 8.6 million T.L., by 1970 this had grown to 502 million T.L. and in 1972 its assets totalled \$300 million.<sup>7</sup>

Given its important position in the economy, alongside the rising Turkish monopoly bourgeoisie, the military had a substantial stake in the maintenance of economic and social stability. But could this be achieved within the framework of a neo-colonial economy dependent on foreign capital? The answer was becoming increasingly clear as the economy continued to deteriorate and plunged into a deeper crisis by the mid-1970s.

Throughout the 1970s Turkey registered a huge deficit in its external trade. Imports continued to grow at a rapid pace, while exports lagged far behind. The net effect of this imbalance was a steady deterioration of the country's terms of trade. Thus, while in 1970 the deficit in foreign trade was 3.2 billion T.L., it increased to 7.4. billion T.L. after the military intervention in 1971. By 1975 the deficit had reached 47.5 billion T.L., and by 1977 it registered a record 71.7 billion T.L.<sup>8</sup> Workers' remittances from abroad, which increased from \$471 million in 1971 to \$1.4 billion in 1974, partially offset the deficit in the early 1970s. But when, in the mid-1970s, European firms began to cut back on foreign labour, sending thousands of workers home, the volume of these remittances fell sharply, to around \$982 million in each of the years 1976-8.<sup>9</sup>

Foreign borrowing allowed the government to cover the deficit in the short run, but the added debt and debt-servicing further aggravated Turkey's balance of payments crisis. Thus, the deficit on the current account increased from \$122 million in 1971 to \$720 million in 1974, and to \$3.4 billion in 1977; and this does not include the amortisation of the public debt, which totalled \$574 million in 1977 alone – with \$360 million of it going to interest payments on previous debt.<sup>10</sup>

Turkey's total foreign debt was \$2.2 billion in 1970, and it had increased to \$3.5 billion by 1975. But, by the end of 1977, it had reached \$12.5 billion,<sup>11</sup> and by 1979 was over \$15 billion. Faced with this crisis, Turkey's creditors, which include 'international' financial agencies and more than 250 private western banks, began to stage a 'rescue operation'. Among the conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the extension of further credit were: deceleration of economic growth (which had already fallen from 7 per cent per year prior to 1976 to about 2 per cent in 1978); a wage freeze; 20-30 per cent devaluation of the Turkish lira (already devalued



fifteen times between 1972 and 1977); a further increase in consumer prices; and large allocations to the private sector from the state budget – a budget already running a deficit of several billion dollars. To carry out the ‘rescue operation’ – in concert with the IMF ‘austerity package’ – a consortium of seven foreign banks began work in early 1979 on the re-scheduling and re-ordering of Turkey’s massive foreign debts, which the *Financial Times* called ‘one of the largest such operations in financial history, involving some 6 billion dollars’.<sup>12</sup>

The real effects of this latest assault on the working people of Turkey have already begun to be felt: the lira has been devalued several times in 1979–80, the latest being by 48 per cent;\* the rate of inflation reached 100 per cent in 1979; the real wages of workers are rapidly declining; the rate of growth of the gross national product is now zero; 50 per cent of plant capacity in industry as a whole is lying idle; the unemployment rate is 20 per cent and rising; and widespread shortages of basic commodities, electricity cuts on a daily basis, scarcity of heating fuel, medicines and other necessities have created an atmosphere of panic among the population.<sup>13</sup>

In the midst of this grim economic situation, there has begun a new round of talks regarding Turkey’s longstanding application to join the European Economic Community (EEC) as a ‘way out’ of its underdeveloped and crisis-ridden position in the world economy. Although the prospects of Turkish membership seem at this point far from certain, the consequences for the Turkish economy would certainly be grave. Turkish entry into the EEC would be of decisive advantage to European capital and, more broadly, to global transnational monopolies. It would mean an opportunity for expanded foreign investments without any restrictions; direct access to abundant cheap labour; access to a steady supply of much-needed oil and other raw materials; the lifting of tariff barriers and other import restrictions to capture a greater share of the local market; and further monopolisation of the local economy, especially in industry. It would mean, in short, continuation of Turkish reintegration into the world economy, but now under European sponsorship.

For Turkey itself, membership would force more small farmers and businesses into bankruptcy, further depopulating the countryside, while adding to the cities’ unemployed. It would worsen inflation, through foreign monopoly control over the prices of basic commodities, and, with the suppression of wages, lower the real income of workers, and hence their living standards. It would mean state control over workers’ rights, so as to encourage foreign investment. It would worsen the country’s balance of trade and of payments, due to increased imports and the lack of sufficient funds to pay for these, given the

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\*From a rate of 2.80 T.L. to \$1 in 1958, it stood, in January 1980, at 70 T.L. to \$1.

persistence of low foreign exchange earnings from underpriced export commodities. It would increase foreign debt and debt-servicing, as more loans would need to be issued by the EEC to 'overcome' these problems. Turkey would also have to continue its immense expenditures on the military, as its role and responsibilities in NATO expand in that region of the world, and in this way further increase its dependence on the West, preventing a break away from the western capitalist orbit.

In the present context, however, the economic and socio-political crises in which Turkey finds itself are so volatile that, despite all the benefits European capital would draw from it, Turkish membership in the EEC is not viewed by the European parliament as an immediate prospect, at least for several more years.

### **Working-class conditions and class struggle, 1970-79**

In 1970, there were 4,324,553 wage workers in Turkey, accounting for 27.3 per cent of the entire labour force.\* Of these, 1,918,601 (or 44.4 per cent) were industrial workers.<sup>14</sup> By 1975, the size of the working class had increased by 29.7 per cent over 1970, reaching 5,609,000 or 36 per cent of the labour force. In industry, it reached 2,309,000 or 14.8 per cent of the total labour force.<sup>15</sup> With the growth of the working class during this period, there also occurred a significant growth in the number of unionised workers — 1,200,000 in 1971 to 2,000,000 in 1978, with DISK accounting for nearly one-half of the total. Union membership in Turkey in 1971 was 30 per cent, i.e., higher than in France (20 per cent) and Federal Germany (25 per cent). It grew rapidly in subsequent years, reaching 42.8 per cent of all wage-earners eligible to become members of trade unions in 1975.<sup>16</sup> This growth is a reflection of the increasing influence of DISK in the workers' movement.

The unionisation drive of the late 1960s and early 1970s made possible the signing of 'favourable' wage contracts. As a result, money wages showed a relative increase during this period. Average daily money wages of insured workers in industry increased at an average annual rate of 12.5 per cent between 1971 and 1978. But the annual increase in the cost of living over the same period averaged 28.7 per cent, reaching 40 per cent at the end of 1977 and 90 per cent in 1978.<sup>17</sup> And in 1979, the inflation rate was a record 100 per cent.<sup>18</sup> This means that the nominal gains in money wages secured by workers in industry during the 1970s were practically wiped out by runaway inflation. Real wages declined in three of the seven years, and, except in 1975-6 — when the working class waged an all-out struggle and secured 'substantial' gains

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\*Of course, the total labour force includes such groups as independent professionals, shopkeepers, farmers, corporate executives, managers, etc.



– increased only slightly in the rest. The biggest drop in real wages came in 1978, when it registered a 22.8 per cent drop over the previous year.\* Overall, the average annual increase in real wages during 1971-8 was 0.4 per cent.

When we examine the level of wages in relation to the ability of workers to purchase the minimum necessities, the picture becomes clearer. In 1974, a five-member worker's family needed to spend 78.50 T.L. per day on food alone,<sup>19</sup> but the average daily gross wage of an insured worker in industry was 67.30 T.L. By 1978, 246.33 T.L. per day was needed for food alone, and, with inflation running at 100 per cent in 1979, this figure had reached 493 T.L. a year later. Considering all other expenses of a worker and his family, the required minimum daily wage in 1979 was over 1,200 T.L. (the official figure was fixed at the absurd level of 180 T.L.). Yet, the average daily gross wage in industry in 1978 was only 207.93 T.L. This means that in the 1970s, as in the previous two decades, the wages received by even the 'highest paid', insured workers were only a fraction of the required minimum wage and were not even enough to cover their families' minimum nutritional requirements. When all the remaining, uninsured and non-unionised workers are taken into account, the level of workers' wages as a whole was far below the level of subsistence, with millions of workers threatened with malnutrition and starvation. It is no wonder that millions of workers have for decades been unable to move out of insanitary and uninhabitable shanties and obtain decent housing. In fact, the number of shanties, or *gecekondu*s, has been increasing rapidly each year since the 1950s.

Throughout the 1970s, the condition of the working class worsened. The trend in the decline of the rate of exploitation – effected through intense struggles in the late 1960s – was sharply reversed after the 1971 coup: it increased from 331 per cent in 1970 to 399 per cent in 1973, and by the mid-1970s it was over 400 per cent. The mass of surplus value increased from 12,119 million T.L. in 1970 to 34,728 million T.L. in 1973 – an increase of 187 per cent.<sup>20</sup> The drive to squeeze out as much surplus value as possible from workers led to an increase in accidents at work – from 144,731 in 1970 to 201,000 in 1976. In addition, over 4,000 workers were killed in work 'accidents' between 1969 and 1974; and in the period 1974-9, this figure had increased to more than 5,000.<sup>21</sup> However, the actual figures are much higher, as the data provided includes only insured workers.

Unemployment, too, reached disastrous levels during the 1970s,

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\*With inflation running at 100 per cent in 1979, the drop in real wages is bound to be even larger than in 1978, for, in following the IMF's 'recommendation', the government put a freeze on all wages and went on to propose in its 1979 budget a 40 per cent cut in the real wages of public sector workers.

especially towards the end. Thus, while there were 2 million unemployed in Turkey in 1971,<sup>22</sup> by the end of 1978 this figure had reached 3.5 million – or 20 per cent of the labour force – according to the OECD, while official Turkish government sources estimate it to be close to 7 million.<sup>23</sup> In addition, 400,000 persons are added to the work force every year, of which 165,000 cannot find work and end up in the ranks of the unemployed. The worsening economic situation in the latter half of the decade, which led to the industrial slump of the late 1970s, has driven many firms out of business, and in the process has left hundreds of thousands of workers jobless, thus compounding the unemployment problem:

In Kayseri, the Chamber of Industry reported that 15 out of a total of 30 workplaces, employing some 3,000 workers, had shut down. In Bursa, 117 firms shut down within the same space of a year, leaving 10,000 jobless ... The President of *Sosyal-Is* trade union disclosed that 65,000 workers had been sacked in 1978. MESS, the employers' union in the metal industry, has warned that 350,000 workers could face the axe ... in the coming period [1979-80].<sup>24</sup>

The workers' response to the deteriorating economic situation has been to stage mass strikes and demonstrations, occupy factories and openly confront the police and armed forces. Between 1970 and 1976, there were 658 industrial strikes, involving well over a hundred thousand workers.<sup>25</sup> By the mid-1970s, the size and strength of DISK and its associated unions had greatly increased and the workers' movement had become more militant. In September 1976, a general strike was called with the demand that the State Security Courts be abolished. In May 1977, 40,000 metal workers belonging to the Metal Workers' Union (*Maden-Is*) began a historic strike against MESS, lasting eight months and ending in victory for the metal workers. Strikes and demonstrations intensified in 1978 with a general strike in March against fascist terrorist campaigns. On 20 March 1978, more than two million people took part in a two-hour general strike called by DISK, which brought together thousands of workers, students and progressives and quickly spread throughout the country, beyond Ankara and Istanbul to Izmir, Bursa, Adana, Mersin, Hatay and Gaziantep. More than 20,000 people took part in the Bursa demonstration alone. During the strike workers hung banners reading 'Fascism shall not pass!' and 'Fascists beware!' on the factory walls. On May Day in 1978 (as in 1977) more than half a million workers, progressives and revolutionaries marched to Istanbul's May Day Square for the largest rally in the capitalist world. DISK, *Maden Is*, *Tekstil*, *Bank-Sen* (Bank Workers' Union) and TOB-DER (Teachers' Association) were among hundreds of trade unions and national and local organisations that



participated in these demonstrations.

### **The intensification of the class struggle**

In all the major rallies and demonstrations throughout Turkey, the demands that the working class made were not simply economic, but were part and parcel of its long-term political interests. They included the immediate abolition of articles 141 and 142 of the Constitution, withdrawal from NATO and the legalisation of the CPT.\* And such demands, backed up by the organisational strength of the working class, were a powerful challenge to the neo-colonial state.

The task of meeting that challenge and halting the growing strength of the working class and its allies was given to Turkes and the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) commandos. Their terrorist campaigns cost many lives during the latter part of the decade. From January to mid-December 1978 alone, over 1,000 persons were killed by NAP commandos. At the end of December 1978, fascist terrorists killed over 100 people and injured over a thousand more in Kahramanmaras. Following the massacre, martial law was declared in thirteen provinces, including Istanbul and Ankara, and eleven eastern provinces with a high proportion of Kurds.\*\* In April 1979, another six eastern provinces (populated mainly by Kurds) were brought under martial law. Though imposed under the 'social-democratic' government of Ecevit, martial law greatly strengthened the hand of the reactionary and fascist forces, as most martial law commanders were members of the NAP. As a result, many progressive organisations and publications were closed down and left-wing militants arrested for wall-postering or being in possession of banned publications. Searches were carried out daily in universities, factories and people's homes by soldiers armed with machine guns. Students at Istanbul University, for example, had to pass through five military check-points before entering classes. On 3 March 1979, *Milliyet* reported that all student dormitories in Istanbul were being searched. At the same time, attacks by the CIA-trained and equipped death squads of NAP intensified, bringing the death toll for 1978-9 to 2,500.<sup>26</sup> But, as Yurukoglu has pointed out, 'Fascism in Turkey is not restricted to the NAP. Fascism is the choice of finance-capital. The NAP is the present-day striking force of fascism.'<sup>27</sup>

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\*The Communist Party of Turkey, founded in 1920, was declared illegal in the early 1920s and has been forced to function clandestinely for all but the first two years of its existence. Despite its official ban, the Party has a substantial base and following throughout the country, especially among militant trade unions and progressive organisations.

\*\*The Kurds, one of several minority nationalities in Turkey, are the largest group in the country. Concentrated mainly in the eastern provinces, they now number nearly nine million, and make up 20 per cent of Turkey's population.

Through the use of the NAP storm-troopers and the imposition of martial law, the collaborating local bourgeoisie began to lay the basis for an open dictatorship.

In response to these attacks, the workers' struggle intensified. On 30 December 1978, nearly 30,000 people, from over fifty different organisations, demonstrated in Izmir, demanding an end to martial law, the arrest of Turkes and the closing down of the NAP. A week later, on 5 January 1979, all trade unions affiliated to DISK were joined by tens of thousands of teachers and working people in a five-minute silent protest against the massacre in Kahramanmaras. Nearly one million people stopped work throughout the country as part of this protest. As May Day 1979 approached, the martial law commanders imposed a uniform ban on May Day meetings, demonstrations and marches in the nineteen provinces under martial law. On 30 April over 500 trade unionists and progressives, including the president of DISK and five members of its executive committee, were arrested. Following this, the Istanbul martial law authorities issued a statement announcing that a 29-hour curfew had been imposed, to take effect from midnight Monday, 30 April to 5am, Wednesday, 2 May, 'warn(ing) the people of Istanbul ... [that] all security forces under martial law command have the authority to shoot'.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the massive display of force by the police and armed forces, May Day meetings were held in all the nineteen provinces in a total of forty-three cities and towns. In Istanbul, which was under curfew, at least seventeen May Day meetings took place throughout the city. Many of these – at building sites, factories and other work-places – were surrounded by troops and police armed with machine-guns. At least 1,200 arrests were made, the demonstrators being herded into the İnönü Stadium, which had been turned into a detention centre for the occasion. In Ankara, clashes between security forces and demonstrators resulted in nearly 700 arrests, and several people were wounded when police opened fire on one group. In Mersin, nearly 200 people were arrested for carrying banners and shouting slogans in Kurdish.<sup>29</sup> The most important of the 1979 May Day demonstrations, however, took place in Izmir, where over 100,000 people gathered. Police and army road blocks around the city effectively prevented thousands more from taking part. The police, 10,000 strong, were backed up not only by army units but by gunboats, a number of which were standing ready in the harbour, and by aerial surveillance and security from helicopters. In the march there were contingents from the unions affiliated to DISK as well as to *Türk-İs*. The presence of hundreds of Kurdish democrats and progressives was a direct rebuff to the government's increasing efforts to set Turk and Kurd against each other. There was huge participation from women, organised by the Progressive Women's Organisation, from young people, and impor-



tant contingents from organisations representing small peasants and rural workers, who called for 'Work, land and freedom' and some of whose banners read 'Our lands not to NATO but to poor peasants'.

The struggle of the working class continued to intensify during the remainder of the year as thousands of workers at Maysan, Renault and other nearby factories in Bursa clashed with military police. In October, '400 workers occupied the Kula Textile Factory in Izmir ... and maintained their occupation for eight hours until police broke down the doors and dispersed them with pressurised water hoses. All 400 workers were arrested. Also in October, 850 workers, 600 of them women, occupied the Ceyhan Textile Factory in Adana ...'<sup>30</sup> At the end of December, strikes and demonstrations were held in more than fifteen cities to protest against military repression and in memory of the victims of the massacre at Kahramanmaraş. The police opened fire on the demonstrators, killing a dozen students and teachers and wounding many more. Over 4,000 people — workers, students and teachers — were arrested and put in the country's stadiums. Nearly 2,000 teachers were suspended, because they boycotted classes on 24 December to take part in the demonstrations, and an undisclosed number of them were subsequently arrested; five schools were closed, and the teachers' union banned. Leaders of *Maden-İs* and *Bank-Sen* were also arrested by the martial law authorities.<sup>31</sup> In the capital, 'several hundred student demonstrators occupied the Yildirim Bayezit High School near Ankara University ... Riot police moved in and firing [between students and police] continued for three hours ... Another clash took place between students and security forces at the industrial vocational school opposite Ankara's central bank.'<sup>32</sup>

Strikes, factory occupations, student protests and demonstrations continued in early 1980. In mid-January, workers in Izmir occupied the state-owned Taris thread factory, protesting against the cancelling of their contracts by the Demirel government and the dismissal of union leaders. The occupation continued for a month, and at one time was supported by 35,000 workers from another union. The action turned into a strong protest against the government's economic policy. Workers blocked the road to the airport, cut off electricity and water supplies, stopped transport in several districts and closed shops. In mid-February, thousands of troopers in tanks and armoured cars stormed the plant and broke up the occupation. Some 1,500 workers were arrested after a six-hour siege. A few days later, in Izmir, a march which had been called by DISK against government austerity measures, developed into a two-day strike of 50,000 workers in protest against the military action at the Taris factory. Also in February,

In the capital city of Ankara ... hundreds of students burned an effigy of Demirel and chanted 'No to the price raises'. Shops and of-

fices in Istanbul were shut down for two days to protest the price hikes ... In Izmir, three cops were killed and seven wounded in street battles with leftists as 2,500 police surrounded the Gultepe shantytown district and shelled it with tear-gas bombs.<sup>33</sup>

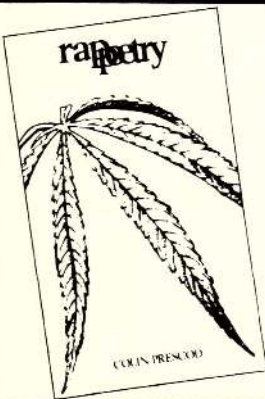
The economic and social crises of the late 1970s and the acceleration of the working-class and people's struggle during the past year led the ruling class to intensify repression and increasingly to look for a fascist 'solution'. Alarmed by the growing workers' movement and the maturing revolutionary situation, the Turkish bourgeoisie has once again turned to the military for 'a way out' of the current crisis and the approaching civil war. At the time of writing (September 1980), a military coup, led by pro-NATO generals, has overthrown the right-wing civilian government of Suleyman Demirel and installed in its place an open military dictatorship. Under the guise of containing 'extremism' from left and right, this is once again attacking the left.

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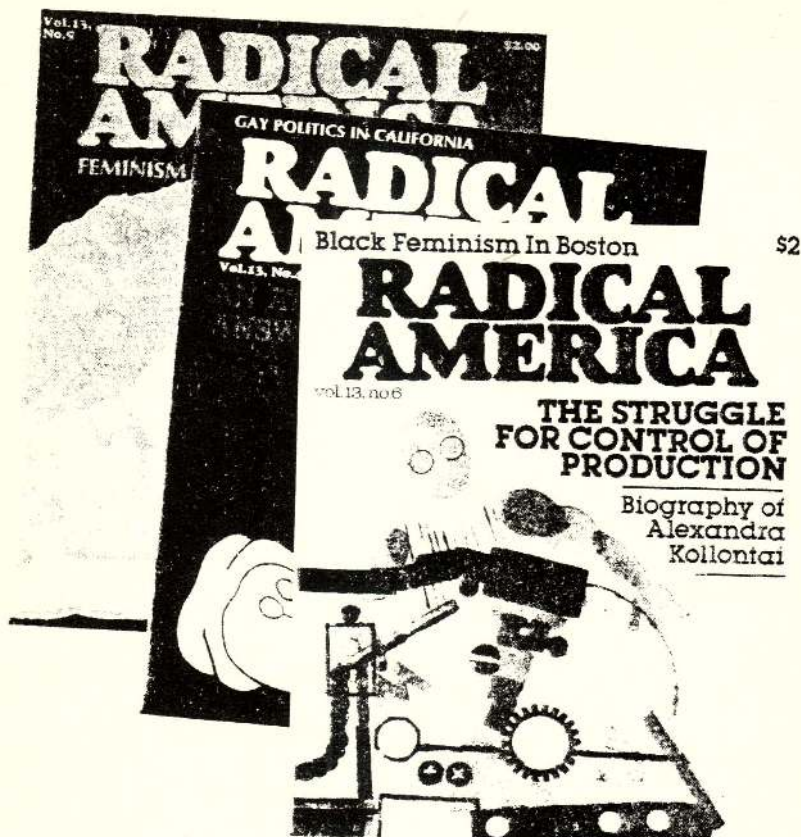
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# Notes and documents

## Race, class and caste in South Africa – an open letter to No Sizwe

Dear Comrade,

I read your book on the national question in South Africa – *One Azania, One Nation*\* – with great interest. But I have certain grave misgivings about your analysis of the elements in the theory of nation (chapter 6). Your discussion of course centres around Azania, but the questions you raise are not unrelated to the problems of other Third World countries. And it is for that reason – and in a spirit of enquiry and friendly discourse – that I take issue with you.

The crux of the matter is your discussion of colour-caste – the implications of that analysis for revolutionary practice. But since you try to clear the ground of ‘terminological’ and ‘conceptual’ obstacles before proceeding to your central thesis, it is to these issues I would first like to address myself.

1. You seem to be saying that to accept the concept of race – however used (anthropologically, biologically or sociologically) – is to accept a racial classification of people, giving each (race) a weightage or, in the alternative, denying it weightage (and therefore a hierarchy of superiority) altogether. ‘For just as the supposed inferiority or superiority of races necessarily assumes the existence of groups of human beings called “races”, so does the assertion that “races” are equal in their potential for development and the acquisition of skill.’

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\*No Sizwe, *One Azania, One Nation: the national question in South Africa* (London, Zed Press, 1979).

So that, for you, it is as meaningless to say that some races are superior to others as it is to say that all races are equal. Hence there is no such thing as race.

But you cannot do away with racism by rejecting the concept of race.

2. You deny the reality of race as a biological entity. Hence you deny the existence of racial groups. For the limited purposes of genetic science, however, you are prepared to describe such groups as 'breeding populations' – since 'such a description has no coherent political, economical or ideological significance'. But however you describe them – and however 'inherently' neutral the description – some 'breeding populations' do think of themselves as superior to other 'breeding populations' and act out that belief to their own social, economic and political advantage. Changing the description does not change the practice – but the practice can taint the description till that ceases to be neutral (so that for racism we merely substitute 'breeding populationism').

In the final analysis, it is the practice that defines terminology, not terminology the practice. The meaning of a word is *not* 'the action it produces' – as you seem to maintain with I.A. Richards. If so, to destroy the word would be to destroy the act – and that is metaphysics. On the contrary, it is action which gives meaning to a word – it is in the act that the word is made flesh. In the beginning was the act, not the word. Thus 'black', which the practice of racism defined as a pejorative term, ceases to be pejorative when that practice is challenged. Black is as black does.

You cannot do away with racism by using a different terminology:

3. Similarly, the use of the term ethnicity to differentiate between human groups that 'for some natural, social or cultural reason come to constitute a (temporary) breeding population' is equally irrelevant. In fact, it is, as you say, 'dangerously misleading'. For, in trying to remove the idea of group superiority while keeping the idea of group difference, ethnicity sidles into a culturalism which predicates separate but equal development, apartheid. It substitutes the vertical division of ethnicity for the horizontal division of class, political pluralism for class conflict, and freezes the class struggle.

4. The concept of national groups implies, as you say, 'a fragmentation of the population into potentially or actually antagonistic groupings', and thereby facilitates 'the maintenance of hegemony by the ruling classes'. And the concept of national minorities, I agree, is essentially a European one and one that once again obscures the essential class nature of society.

5. But 'race' in its original sense of 'a group of persons or animals or plants connected by common descent or origin' (*Shorter Oxford Dictionary*) is no less neutral a term than 'breeding populations'. And that there are differences between such groups is an observable fact. What



is *material*, however, is neither the term nor the group differences it implies, but the differential power exercised by some groups over others by virtue of, and on the basis of, these differences – which in turn engenders the belief that such differences are material. What gives race a bad name, in other words, is not the racial differences it implies or even the racial prejudice which springs from these differences, but the racist ideology that grades these differences in a hierarchy of power – in order to rationalise and justify exploitation. And in that sense it belongs to the period of capitalism.

6. Your ‘central thesis’, however, is that ‘colour-caste’ best describes ‘the officially classified population registration groups in South Africa’ – and that it is of ‘pivotal political importance to characterise them as such’. About the importance of correct analysis for correct political action I have no disagreement. But, for that very reason, I find your characterisation of South Africa’s racial groups as colour-castes not only wrong, but misleading.

Your argument for using the caste concept is made on the basis that South Africa’s racial system (my phrase) has the same characteristics as the caste system in India.\* These refer to such things as rituals, privileges, mode of life and group cohesion (‘an integrative as opposed to a separatist dynamic’). And whether or not ‘the origin of the caste system in India is related to the question of colour’, the crucial difference is that in India it is ‘legitimised by cultural-religious criteria’, whereas in South Africa it is ‘legitimised by so-called “racial” criteria’. But in both, caste relations are ‘social relations based on private property carried over in amended form from the pre-capitalist colonial situation to the present capitalist period’. To ‘distinguish it in its historical specificity’, however, you would characterise the caste system in South Africa as a colour-caste system – in which ‘the castes articulate with the fundamental class structure of the social formations ...’

But, in the first place, these are analogies at the level of the superstructure, with a passing consideration for the ‘historical specificity’ that distinguishes the two systems. They relate to ideological, cultural characteristics adjusted to take in considerations of class and social formations, but they do not spring from an analysis of the specific social formations themselves – they are not historically specific. That specificity has to be sought not in this or that set of religious or racial criteria, but in the social formation and therefore the historical epoch from which those criteria spring. The social formation in which the Indian caste system prevailed is qualitatively different to the social formation in South Africa, and indeed to that of India today. Secondly, it is not enough to say that caste relations are ‘social relations in private

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\*I am not here concerned with Cox’s or Berreman’s position – let alone that of Van den Berghe.

property carried over in amended form' from a pre-capitalist era to a capitalist one, without specifying at the same time that private property in the earlier period referred mainly to land, whereas in capitalist society it refers also to machinery, factories, equipment. And that alters the nature of their respective social relations fundamentally. Thirdly, and most importantly, you make no reference to the *function* of caste. Caste relations in India grew organically out of caste functions of labour. They were relations of production predicated by the level of the productive forces but determined by Hindu ideology and polity. But as the productive forces rose and the relations of production changed accordingly, caste lost its original *function* – and, un-needed by capital, it was outlawed by the state. But because India, unlike South Africa, is a society of a thousand modes, caste still performs some function in the interstices of its pre-capitalist formation and caste relations in its culture. South Africa, however, has caste relations without ever having had a caste function. Such relations have not grown out of a pre-capitalist mode; nor are they relations of production stemming from the capitalist mode. They are, instead, social relations enforced by the state to demarcate racial groups with a view to differential exploitation within a capitalist system.

To put it differently, caste as an instrument of exploitation belongs to an earlier social formation – what Samir Amin calls the tributary mode – where the religio-political factor and not the economic was dominant and hence determined social relations. The Hindu religion, like all pre-capitalist religions, encompassed all aspects of human life and Hindu ideology determined the social relations from which the class-state could extract the maximum surplus: the caste system. It is in that sense that India's great marxist scholar Kosambi defines caste as 'class at a lower level of the productive forces'.<sup>1</sup>

In the capitalist system, however, it is the economic factor which is dominant; it is that which determines social relations and, in the final analysis, the political and ideological superstructures. And how these are shaped and modified depends on how the economic system is made to yield maximum surplus value with minimum social dislocation and political discontent. Exploitation, in other words, is mediated through the state which ostensibly represents the interests of all classes.

Since European capitalism emerged with the conquest of the non-white world, the exploitation of the peoples of these countries found justification in theories of white superiority. Such attitudes were already present in Catholicism, but, muted by the belief that the heathen could be saved, found no ideological justification in scripture. The forces that unleashed the bourgeois revolution, however, were also the forces that swept aside the religious inhibitions that stood in the way of the new class and installed instead a new set of beliefs that sought virtue in profit and profit in exploitation. 'Material success was



at once the sign and reward of ethical superiority' and riches were 'the portion of the Godly than of the wicked'<sup>2</sup> – and each man's station in life was fixed by heavenly design and unalterable. You were rich because you were good, you were good because you were rich – and poverty was what the poor had brought upon themselves. But to fulfil one's 'calling' was virtue enough.

In such a scheme of things, the bourgeoisie were the elect of God, the working class destined to labour and the children of Ham condemned to eternal servitude – 'a servant of servants ... unto his brethren'. Each man was locked into his class and his race, with the whites on top and the blacks below. And between the two there could be no social mixing, for that would be to disrupt the race-class base on which exploitation was founded. To prevent such mixing, however, recourse was had to Old Testament notions of purity and pollution. Social or caste barriers, in other words, were not erected to preserve racial purity; rather, racial purity was 'erected' to preserve social, and therefore economic, barriers. The reasons for the racial divide, that is, were economic, but the form their expression took was social.

Thus, the racism of early capitalism was set in caste-like features – not ordained by religion, as in Hinduism, but inspired by it, not determining the extraction of surplus but responding to it. The Calvinist diaspora, 'the seed-bed of capitalistic economy',<sup>3</sup> would sow too the seeds of racism, but how they took root and grew would depend on the ground on which they fell.

In general, however, as capitalism advanced and became more 'secular', racism began to lose its religious premise and, with it, its caste features and sought validity instead in 'scientific' thought and reason – reaching its nineteenth-century apogee in Eugenics and Social Darwinism. Not fortuitously, this was also the period of colonial-capitalist expansion. But at the same time, with every advance in the level of the productive forces and, therefore, in the capitalist mode – from mercantile to industrial to finance and monopoly capital – racist ideology was modified to accord with the economic imperative. Slavery is abolished when wage-labour (and slave rebellion) makes it uneconomical; racism in the colonies becomes outmoded with the advent of neo-colonialism and is consigned to the metropole with the importation of colonial labour. And within the metropolises themselves, the contours and content of racism are changed and modified to accommodate the economic demands (class) and political resistance (race) of black people. Racism may yet remain as a cultural artefact of an earlier epoch, but racism recedes in order that capital might survive.\*

\*Racialism refers to attitudes, behaviour, 'race relations'; racism is the systematisation of these into an explicit ideology of racial superiority and their institutionalisation in the state apparatus.

But not in South Africa. There, though the economy is based in the capitalist mode, the superstructure bears no organic relationship to it. It does not on the whole respond to the economic imperatives of the system. And that inflexibility in turn inhibits the base, holds it down, prevents it from pursuing its own dynamic. Hence, there is a basic contradiction between the superstructure and the base.

Where that contradiction is located, however, is in that part of the superstructure which relates to the black working class – and black people generally. In effect, there are two superstructures (to the same economic base) – one for the whites and another for the blacks. The white superstructure, so to speak, accords with the economic imperatives – and is modified with changes in the level of the productive forces and of class struggle. It exhibits all the trappings of capitalist democracy (including a labour movement that represents the interests of the white working class) and of capitalist culture (except when it comes to mixing with the blacks). For the blacks, however, there is no franchise, no representation, no rights, no liberties, no economic or social mobility, no labour movement that cannot be put down with the awesome power of the state – no nothing. The ‘black superstructure’, in other words, is at odds with the capitalist economy, sets the economy at odds with itself, and inhibits its free development – so that only changes in that superstructure, in racism, can release the economy into its own dynamic. South Africa, therefore, is an exceptional capitalist social formation.

In the second place, South Africa’s racist ideology, compared to that of other capitalist societies, has not changed over the years. Instead, it has gathered to itself the traits, features, beliefs, superstitions, habits and customs of both pre-capitalist and capitalist social formations. Its caste features bear an uncanny resemblance to the Hindu caste system of medieval India, though we know them to be inspired by Calvinism, the religion of capital. It combines, in Ken Jordaan’s exact phrase, ‘the Afrikaners’ fundamentalist racialism with the instrumentalist racism of British imperialism’.<sup>4</sup> It finds authority in religion and in science both at once – in the doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church and the teachings of Darwin. (‘At the birth of the Union of South Africa’, says Jordaan, ‘Calvin and Darwin shook hands over the chained body of the black.’) It is enforced by a capitalist state and receives its sanction from the church. And it is as open, obtrusive and unashamed as the racism that once justified the trade in human beings.

7. But what are the material conditions that made South Africa’s racist ideology so intractable? What is the significance of the modifications that are currently being made in the racist structure?

These are not your questions and I am not competent to answer them, but you (and Johnstone<sup>5</sup>) go some way to answering the first in implying that South African capitalism was neither colonial nor



industrial (in the strict sense), but extractive – derived from diamond and gold mining. Which meant that the labour process called for a mass of unskilled labour which was found in the native black population – and a docile workforce which could be fashioned by racism. Hence, the nature of early South African capitalism reinforced and did not loosen up on racism as, for instance, in the USA.

Secondly, South Africa was a settler society which neither assimilated itself into the indigenous social structure (as Aryan India) nor was able to decimate the native population (as in the USA or the Caribbean). The settlers instead were (and are) a slender minority, distinguished by race and colour, faced with a massive black population. (The only parallel is Zimbabwe.) Hence, the only way they could preserve their economic privileges and their political power was to stand full-square against the encroachments of the black masses.

But – and here I am addressing myself to the second question – the demands in the economic imperative, both nationally and internationally, can no longer be ignored. Hence, Botha's attempts to 'modernise' racism – to accord with monopoly capital – by removing its caste features.

There are other changes, however, which have been in train for a longer time – and which are more dangerous. And these, as you rightly point out, are the creation of a black comprador class (comparatively negligible) and, more importantly, of black 'nations'.

In theoretical terms, what these strategies hope to resolve is the contradiction between superstructure and base, and so release the economic forces without incurring the loss of (white) political power. First, by removing the caste barriers and thereby providing social and economic mobility for the black working class within the central social formation. Secondly, by removing the superstructure for the blacks into a social formation of their own, a black state, in which they would appear to govern themselves while still being governed. The conflict, in other words, is extrapolated into a different (black) social formation – which is then subsumed to the needs of the central social formation, thereby maintaining, as you say, the hegemony of the ruling classes – to me, the white ruling class. For, surrounded as South Africa is by black African nations – and given the lesson of Zimbabwe – there is no way it is going to cede an iota of white power of which racism is the guarantor. So that even if, at some far point in the future, racism dies for capital to survive, it will have to be resurrected – for capital to survive in white hands.

8. Which brings me to my final point. You say – and perhaps you are forced into saying it by virtue of your colour-caste interpretation (and on behalf of marxist orthodoxy) – that in the final analysis, the struggle in South Africa is a class struggle, to be waged by the working class as a whole, black and white alike.

But, as I hope I have shown, South Africa is the one capitalist country (Zimbabwe might have gone the same way but for black guerrilla struggle) where ideology and not production relations determines white working-class consciousness.\* That is not to say that there are no class contradictions between white capital and the white working class, but to say that – vis à vis the black working class – the horizontal division of class assumes the vertical division of race: the horizontal is the vertical. Class is race, race class. In other words, so long as the blacks are forced to remain a race apart, the white working class can never become a class for itself. And as for the blacks, if the unending rebellion of the past few years and the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement are anything to go by, they are fast becoming both a race and a class for themselves – and that is a formidable warhead of liberation. In sum, the racist ideology of South Africa is an explicit, systematic, holistic ideology of racial superiority – so explicit that it makes clear that the white working class can only maintain its standard of living on the basis of a black under-class, so systematic as to guarantee that the white working class will continue to remain a race for itself,\*\* so holistic as to ensure that the colour line is the power line is the poverty line.

To reiterate, in its ability to influence the economic structure – rather than be influenced by it – South Africa's racist ideology belongs to a pre-capitalist social formation but, anachronistically, is present in a capitalist one – thereby distorting it. (It is not a pure capitalist social formation, in other words.) The emphasis on the ideological instance produces a characterisation of the population groups in South Africa as caste groups demarcated on colour lines (and 'articulating' with the class structure); an emphasis on the economic mode produces a straightforward (marxist) race-class concept and characterisation – thereby leading one to conclude that the economy in trying to burst its bonds would burst also the racist nexus. But if they are both comprehended equally and at once, holistically, South Africa shows up as an exceptional capitalist social formation in which race is class and class race – and the race struggle is the class struggle.

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- 1 D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India* (London, 1965).
- 2 R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 1975).

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\*This may be a heresy, but South Africa is a country that invites heresies.

\*\*Note, for instance, how white workers have recently demonstrated their unrelenting opposition to blacks moving up into skilled jobs – thereby serving to entrench white racial superiority and engendering fascist attitudes, which the state could well exploit.



- 3 Gothein quoted in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London, 1965).  
 4 K. Jordaan, 'Iberian and Anglo-Saxon racism', in *Race & Class* (Vol. 20, no. 4, Spring 1979).  
 5 F.A. Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold* (London, 1976).

## Bolivia – the struggle continues: an interview with Domitila Barrios de Chungara\*

*Another coup in a country which has known nearly 200 in 155 years of independence might mean nothing. But the coup of 17 July 1980 is probably the most significant in Bolivia's history – as the present regime seeks finally to end the country's fragile democratic structures and place it firmly alongside the regimes of Chile and Argentina. Military rule is being institutionalised on the Chilean model and a new constitution for Bolivia, written by the present junta, is in the offing.*

*Resistance to military rule has a long tradition in Bolivia. In 1953 – despite attempts by the military to prevent it – the progressive Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) was brought to power by a mass mobilisation of peasants and workers. But the MNR moved first towards reformism and then conservatism, paving the way for General Barrientos to be elected vice-president in 1964 and then to take power as leader of a military junta. Military control of the country continued. In 1971, General Hugo Banzer seized power and began one of the longest and most repressive military regimes in the country's history. But in 1978, he was forced to call elections, due to popular resistance and opposition through a hunger strike within the country, and to US pressure and international condemnation of his repressive measures. However, in the last three years, three civilian governments have been elected and each time the military has seized power almost immediately.*

*Domitila Barrios de Chungara, leader of the Housewives Committee in the mining centre of Siglo XX and author of Let Me Speak, was attending the UN Women's Conference in Copenhagen at the time of the latest coup. She immediately began to mobilise international support against the present regime and was consequently branded a traitor and threatened with execution if she returned to her country.*

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\*Interview by Jane McIntosh, a freelance journalist, who works with the Committee for the Defence of Democracy in Bolivia, in London.

*Jane McIntosh:* Can you tell us something about the current crisis in Bolivia?

*Domitila de Chungara:* Well, the truth is that the Bolivian people are tired of living under military dictatorships. For the last forty years we have lived under very bloody dictatorships. And this last coup, in July 1980, was the most brutal, the most terrible. This time the military had the help and technical assistance of the Argentinian army – they had also learnt lessons from the military in Chile, and their techniques of repression. We want to live under a legally elected government, a democratic government with a parliament. But the word ‘democracy’ is extremely fragile in the face of machine guns and tanks.

*JM:* Can you explain some of the background to this?

*DC:* Well, to do that I’ll have to go back a bit, to the dictatorship of General Banzer – to 1971. When he took power, he saw the trade union organisations and political parties as a threat, so he abolished them, he made them all illegal. He was lucky when he came to power, because the economy was then strong enough to allow him to do many things. There was a sharp rise in the price of tin, from \$3 a pound to \$7 or \$8. The price of oil rose too, but instead of keeping the reserves he sold very cheaply to Brazil, and then there was no oil for Bolivia itself. He devalued the peso by 100 per cent, and the peasants, who at that time were still his allies, asked him why everything had gone up so much. Banzer’s way of explaining was to send in the tanks and massacre the peasants. And the British ambassador at the time actually said that this was ‘necessary’ in order to get rid of the leftists and communists.

Then, finally, there came the opening for democracy. This began with the hunger strike of four women in December 1977. They were supported nationally, with many joining in, including *campesinos*, who also blocked the roads in support. There was also international support. Through this struggle we achieved an amnesty for all the political prisoners – the political and trade union leaders – held by Banzer, and thus began a stage of pseudo-democracy. We call it that because although it is true that some leaders were set free, and others returned from exile, the repressive organisations, the paramilitary groups, the army, continued to operate in the same way. From the beginning of 1978, the people began to reorganise their trade unions, their political parties, and elections were held. Three elections were held in 1978, 1979 and 1980 and each one was brought down by a coup d’état. With each election and each coup the people were more divided, and more and more parties developed. In the last elections, in 1980, there were more than fifty political parties.

*JM:* These parties, were they left wing?



DC: No, no, they were right wing. Well, in the end I don't know who is rightist and who is leftist in Bolivia, *compañera*, that's how much confusion there is. There are many who are said to be left wing, but what kind of left wing could it be?

JM: So, the people had little confidence in the parties?

DC: Well, the Bolivian people were being increasingly divided, but the Bolivian government was never able effectively to divide the people from their labour movement. The only force that has been able to stand up to the military is the central trade union federation – the *Central Obrero Boliviano* (COB).

After the coup of Natusch Busch in November 1979, the COB organised, in response to the growing military strength, a Committee for the Defence of Democracy in Bolivia (Conade). This was able to unite wide sections of the Bolivian people, including the COB, all the political parties (except right-wing ones), the permanent Assembly for Human Rights, much of the Catholic and Methodist churches, neighbourhood councils, university teachers and students, Housewives Committees, the Federation of Peasant Women and other women's organisations. In short, the whole of the Bolivian people were united in their political, trade union, religious, civil and cultural organisations within this committee. Thus, after the coup of Natusch Busch, the trade union organisations were able through a general strike and resistance to force him to resign and hand back the government to an interim president, Lidia Gueiler, and Congress.

JM: In the event, the Congress government was a stalling mechanism, until the time of the next election (called for June 1980). As we know, shortly after the elections, General Garcia Meza seized power. What led up to his coup?

DC: From March 1980, we began to live a phase which, I would say, was similar to that of Chile before the 1973 coup. In March, the cattle ranchers began to demand huge price increases for meat. The majority of the cattle ranchers are military men – General Banzer is one of the richest cattle ranchers of Santa Cruz. Similarly, sugar producers demanded a price rise, as did rice producers. When the government refused to pay the price asked by the rice producers, they refused to sell to the state company. So the government brought in huge quantities of rice from Pakistan. But word went round that it had a grub in it and caused a terrible illness. This alarmed many people.

Flour disappeared overnight; there was no bread, meat or sugar in the shops. You could only get sugar from one shop, and there was an enormous queue. Then, the wives of the military, who never normally go to the market, appeared. They talked to the people queuing and said, this is what happens when you have democracy; when you have a

civilian government, there is hunger, misery and no food. These middle-class women would say that when Banzer was in power there was no scarcity of food – so everyone should vote for Banzer. His election slogans were ‘With Banzer you don’t have to queue’, ‘With Banzer there is bread’.

So from March onwards we knew the coup was coming and we began to organise, to decide how best to defend ourselves against it. The two main points of defence were a general strike and for the peasants to block all the roads.

In Siglo XX, where I live, the five trades unions, the neighbourhood groups, the housewives and the students met and we began to analyse how best to carry out these instructions from the COB. We have little to defend ourselves with when there is a coup. What happens when there is a general strike is that the army surrounds the mining camps in order to prevent any food coming in and so starves the people into submission. They cut off the water as well, so in the end we have to give up. So the first thing we did in Siglo XX was to collect as much food as possible, in order to maintain the general strike as long as we could. This, of course, was difficult because our wages are so low. But we did what we could.

Another thing is that the army always takes us by surprise, and the first thing they do is to take over our radio stations and seize the leaders. The miners have installed their own radio stations in the camps and through them are able to broadcast their resistance. So, in Siglo XX we mounted a permanent guard from March onwards, so as not to be taken by surprise.

*JM:* And when the coup happened?

*DC:* There were many differences between this coup and previous ones. In La Paz, paramilitary gangs carried out raids, operating out of ambulances. The first thing that they did when they took power was to take over the offices of the COB – not the National Palace, which, as the place of state power, should be the first objective. (But then, in my country, the only force that has ever been able to confront military governments is the trade union organisation.) They killed Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, leader of the Socialist Party, and took other leaders prisoner. They knew who was going to put up the greatest resistance, and so it was the COB and then the mining districts that the military attacked with the greatest force. It was not until later that they took the National Palace. The embassies were patrolled by the paramilitary gangs and people trying to enter them were shot. The borders were closed to prevent people escaping. The church said that at least 2,000 people had been arrested.

We did what we could. But let me tell you what happened in the attack on just one mine, Caracoles, which, in spite of being one of the



most profitable mines, is also one of the poorest areas. The mine is right up on the mountain tops where it is very cold and there is a permanent frost. The army stormed the encampment and massacred more than 900 people. They got hold of the young men and beat them with ropes; they made them swallow dust. They put broken glass down on the ground and made children lie down on top of it. Then they made the mothers trample on top of their children. That must be the greatest crime – to make a mother do something like that to her own child. Not content with that, the soldiers themselves trampled on top of the children. Women and girls were raped and many died from haemorrhages. They put dynamite into the mouth of one of the miners' leaders and set it off in the middle of the square. And those people who wanted to find the bodies of their dead relatives were forbidden to go and look for them; many of them were also killed. When the army eventually left Caracoles and the people were able to go back and look for their relatives, all they found were a few blood-stained pieces of clothing – there was not a single sign of a corpse.

Miners barricaded the streets to prevent the army getting in. The radios said 10,000 *campesinos* had come to join the resistance. The people were ready to fight although they had no arms. The general strike held on for more than three weeks in some areas. But eventually, the miners had to surrender because the military knew how to cut off the water and starve us out.

Since the coup the army has tried to bring everything back to normal, but although the miners are working, virtually with a gun at their backs, they are still resisting. I have received cables which confirm this. In spite of the coercion, the miners are bringing out stones and rocks from the mines instead of the minerals. The directors of the mining companies are now asking the military to get out of the mines because they fear production will go down to zero. People are writing messages of resistance on the bank notes and the regime is being forced to print new ones to replace them.

*JM:* Garcia Meza seized power from the legally elected *Unidad Democrática y Popular* government (UDP), which can be described as a progressive left alliance. What support does Garcia Meza have in the country?

*DC:* Well, in the country he doesn't have any support at all. The ones who do support him are the fascists and the cocaine traffickers. But the fascists are fighting among themselves. Cocaine traffic is worth nearly a \$1,000 million a year.\* They gave the regime \$100 million. They knew that the UDP government, elected in June, would have tried to put an

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\*Although Bolivia is one of the world's largest tin producers, cocaine is estimated to be its largest export-earner, worth nearly double the amount earned by tin.

end to the trade. That is why they support the coup. But the army is there because it has the arms and holds the power. It is going to stay in power too, because this regime is modelled on the lines of those of Argentina and Brazil – military government has become institutionalised. Today it is represented by Garcia Meza, tomorrow another ‘leader’ could appear. They have organised themselves so securely this time that they will decide amongst themselves who is to be head of the government – there will not be another coup. At the moment the regime is under international pressure, from the US-backed economic boycott and because of non-recognition by all but twenty foreign states. This could mean that it will change the leader, give some guarantees of individual liberties and so on – but nothing more.

*JM:* What about international economic pressure – is it going to be effective? And what about the US?

*DC:* The United States? Well, for me they say one thing and do completely the opposite. On the one hand, Carter speaks about respecting human rights and on the other, the Pentagon has a hand in all the repressive military regimes in Latin America. There may be contradictory forces in the US, but the principal interest is that of the Pentagon.

But the economic boycott that some countries have imposed is important, for the economy in Bolivia is very weak. We have a foreign debt of \$2,000 million. My father used to say that each one of us Bolivians is in debt up to the top of our heads. Each of my children would have to be sold to pay the debt. We have given our wealth away – Banzer gave away all our oil to Brazil and Argentina, and now we have no oil. We have to buy it back from them.

There is dreadful unemployment, for our sons, for women. Many Bolivians emigrate to Argentina, to Brazil, where they work for a few months, come back for a few days and then go away again. If we go on strike in the mine, they just bring in even cheaper labour – so they fire us and hire others.

But the regime has many problems – they say the soldiers weren’t paid for weeks, that they can’t pay the public employees. If no one gives them money, the IMF for example, then they are going to have many problems.

*JM:* You have said that a lot of Bolivia’s natural resources – oil, for instance – have been squandered. Can you tell us more about this?

*DC:* Bolivia is rich in raw materials. It exports all kinds of minerals: tin, silver, gold, zinc. We also have oil and rubber. And there are so few of us Bolivians, scarcely five million in the whole country. With so much wealth and so few of us we ought to be dying of happiness and wealth. But, on the contrary, we hardly have enough to keep alive and we live in the most miserable conditions. Our country exports raw



materials, gives huge profits to the foreign capitalists who invest in our country, who leave nothing for the people. And they have their local collaborators, who are greedy for power and wealth. It is the Bolivian people who suffer the burdens – exploitation and coup d'états.

We have a long tradition of exploitation, first by the Spaniards and then by the three tin barons\* who controlled all our wealth. But, in 1952, there was a national revolution. The Bolivian people, workers, peasants and miners, defeated an attempted coup and allowed the MNR, who had won the elections the year before, to take power. The MNR, to become popular with the people, had taken up the banner of the struggles of the miners and peasants. Among the demands were the reorganisation (nationalisation) of the mines, votes for the peasantry – the *campesinos* did not have the right to vote – and agrarian reform.

The MNR took advantage of these issues to gain power, but it was easy to see that they did not want to carry out any of the changes. But as the people had given power to them, they obliged them to keep their word and carry out these measures. So, they nationalised the mines, but in the bourgeois style – not imposed by the people as it should be, but imposed by those above, fashioned by them. They paid compensation to the tin barons, for example, and we only just last year finished paying off this compensation. We had to pay for so many years.

The agrarian reform was also done in the bourgeois style. The best lands – those with the best water supplies, the most fertile – the government kept, calling them 'state reserves'. Those lands that were almost useless they distributed amongst the *campesinos* to start up *minifundia*. But, traditionally, the land had to be divided up amongst the *campesino's* sons, and his sons' sons, so that they end up fighting amongst themselves. With no credit and no assistance the reform just didn't work. The *campesinos* had always worked on the bosses' land under their instructions. What happened was that the *campesinos* became very individualistic, each with their ten hectares, ready to die for their land and ready to fight each other.

For years there was a division between us – the miners and the *campesinos* – for the enemy has worked very cunningly. With the agrarian reform, they bribed the *campesinos* so that there was even at one time an alliance between the military and the leaders of the *campesinos*. But, since 1978, the divisions orchestrated between the miners and the *campesinos* have begun to be overcome. For the *campesinos* blocked roads and joined in the hunger strike with us, and from there we began an alliance. All of us miners have our roots in the countryside, but we allowed ourselves to forget where we came from. Now we have realised our mistake. I remember one *campesino* used to

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\*Three families alone owned and controlled the whole of Bolivia's tin industry from the nineteenth century until nationalisation in 1952.

say that we need not sign any pact or alliance. It is a pact we carry in our blood – you are our sons and daughters, he used to tell us.

*JM:* You have told us a great deal about the political situation in Bolivia and the struggles the Bolivian people have waged. Can you tell us something about the daily lives of mining people, for example in Siglo XX – in particular, what the women experience?

*DC:* Siglo XX, where I live, is one of the main mining areas of Bolivia. It is also always the last to give up resisting coups. It is so far away from the commercial and production centres, so remote, but when we are on strike we have held on for months – one month, a month and a half, up to two months.

In the mines we women have to get up at 4am to make the breakfast for our *compañeros*. They have to get up at 5am to go to work and when they are in the mine they are not allowed to eat – and they work eight-hour shifts. When they come out, they are so tired that they don't even have the strength to eat. My *compañero*, who works inside the mine, earns \$1.50 a day. With eight children that is not enough to live on. So every day I make pasties and rolls to sell in the street – to make enough I need the help of all my children – from the youngest to the oldest. In my house ten people have to work in order for us to survive – and we don't even own our house, such as it is.

We live very close to the director of the mining company. He earns 20,000-30,000 pesos,\* and we miners, including all our extra benefits, can only make 3,000 pesos. The director goes to work at 9am. He can eat whenever he wants as his office is right next door to his home. And at lunchtime he goes home and has a rest before going back to work in the afternoon. His wife has eight servants to help her with her work, and their wages are paid by the company, not by her. In the mining centres the women have begun to realise that the system not only exploits the workers in the mines, but also the women who have to support the miners and also the children. While the director of the mining company's children play, my children have to work in order to survive.

*JM:* You were one of the first women to work in the Housewives Committee – how did it come about?

*DC:* Well, there was quite a lot of opposition from our husbands when we started the committee in June 1961. To begin with, no one really accepted the importance of a women's organisation, for in Bolivia we are accustomed to women not participating. Women are regarded as inferior beings, incapable of taking responsibilities. Actually, we as women underestimated our own capacity, but the stronger *compañeras* were firm in their decision to make themselves known as human beings

\*The exchange rate is 25 pesos to the dollar.



capable of achieving something. So, they persevered and now we have a situation where the women's organisation is indispensable, and has been for the last three years. All the trade union organisations are driven crazy, worried because their women are organising themselves in Housewives Committees, affiliating to the Federation of Peasant Women, for example, and the movement is growing, becoming very large.

*JM:* What do you feel about the women's movement internationally? You were rather angry at what you saw in Mexico in 1976, according to your book.

*DC:* When I was in Mexico for the international women's conference in 1976, I saw only one kind of feminism and it was the first time I had heard the word. But it degraded women, their fight was against men – not for the true values that we should have, but for the right to get drunk, to prostitute themselves. I heard *these* things called feminism. In the time I have now spent in Europe I have met with many women's groups. After having met with all of them, it seems to me that although it takes on all kinds of forms, there is discrimination against women in all parts of the world. We can help each other greatly for there are so many things that we have in common, the women of Europe and the women of Bolivia. We are all looking for ways of improving the world and putting technological advances to the benefit of all. But the trouble is that we all have the fault of not really listening to one another, understanding and helping one another, at these important international meetings like we had in Mexico and Copenhagen.

For I also think that the situation of Bolivian women cannot be looked at in the same way as the situation of European women, for example. They have other problems, it is another struggle. For example, some *compañeras* here in Europe say that we have to fight against the patriarchy of men, that this patriarchy cannot exist and so on – and she wants me to think the same. But I don't. I know that there is patriarchy – a *machismo* as we call it – that we do not accept. We have to fight against it. But for us there is another fight which is more important. For us in Bolivia, the struggle begins in being able to leave our homes, and that is a struggle, and we are fighting for our right to participate.

Over time I have learnt to reconsider my assessment of feminism and investigate more. If I have the opportunity to return to Bolivia, then I hope to be able to participate and discuss these things more. It would be good if the *compañeras* could come and learn more, as I have done, but I am alone at the moment and this is not possible.

*JM:* And what about your personal situation?

*DC:* Well, I am going to continue to speak out – for they want to keep us quiet. But the people are still resisting the military, they themselves

have begun to fire like rifles. For us, who are further from the guns, we must continue to denounce the military for what they are. We have to denounce the idea that there are good military men who can 'save' Bolivia, for there are none, they do not exist. For if they did, where were they when the Bolivian people were being massacred? The only thing they share is their ambition for power. We have to fight for the freedom of the imprisoned trade union leaders, for all who have been tortured. We must condemn the military dictatorship.

There have been many military raids on my house, everything I have ever had they have taken. If I had a radio, they took it. If I had a new pair of shoes for my children, they took them. Now, there is only my house, so they will have to take that now. The only things I have left are my children. They, the military, think we must obey them. I am condemned by them as a traitor to my country — to me that seems like the highest order of merit.

*October 1980*

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# Book reviews

## *Traitor to his class*

### *Assassination on Embassy Row*

By JOHN DINGES AND SAUL LANDAU (New York, Pantheon and London, Writers and Readers, 1980). 411pp. Cloth £6.95

*Assassination on Embassy Row* is really four books in one. It is, in the first place, a meticulous account of the events surrounding the assassination in Washington on 21 September 1976 of Orlando Letelier, the Chilean Socialist Party leader, and of Ronni Moffitt, his co-worker in the Institute for Policy Studies. The book traces the preparation of the killing in Chile and in the shadows of the Cuban demi-monde in the USA, and follows the investigation through its many meanderings up to the conviction of some of those involved in February 1979. But through the twists of this story three other major topics emerge, each with dimensions sufficient to fill a whole book.

One is the story of Orlando Letelier himself, the middle-class radical who opted for socialism and, after serving the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende, became such a prominent exile leader that General Pinochet had him killed. Another is that of Chile in the 1970s, both before and after the September 1973 coup, together with a fascinating and novel portrait of the workings of the Chilean state after 1973. Landau and Dinges chart the functioning of the military and security apparatuses, and the contradictions between the narrowly military elements and the civilian financial and industrial class who backed the junta. Finally, it is a book about the US state. It describes the rifts and conflicts within the Washington bureaucracy that both enabled the assassination to occur and then enabled the FBI agents

investigating the killings to trace those responsible. At the same time, it gives a fascinating insight into the relations between the US government and one of its junior allies, into how far the US state, as a whole, can influence Third World states and into how those trying to press for a confrontation with Pinochet were blocked, in the final analysis, by US officials in Washington. If simplistic notions of 'imperialism' as a monolith are dispelled by this story, so too are those interpretations of the US state as merely the site of competing pressures – a free for all in which the relations between the US and its Third World allies work themselves out haphazardly. What we get is a picture of a diverse and at times unpredictable state which is, in the last resort, run by people who can and do protect themselves.

The hero of the story is Orlando Letelier himself. Born in 1932 into a provincial middle-class family, Letelier made the unusual choice of joining the military academy in Santiago, the Chilean capital, in order, as he told his father, 'to gain discipline with which to face the world'. He was a convinced socialist from his teens, and after studying at university, he entered the Department of Copper, out of a belief that this was a place where an informed and professional militancy could advance Chile's interests. But after campaigning for the Socialist Party candidate Salvador Allende in the 1958 elections, he was sacked from the Department. A high official told him: 'Your punishment is an example, for betraying your class.'

In the 1960s Letelier worked in Washington for the Inter-American Development Bank, and when Allende was finally elected President in 1970 he appointed Letelier, who had by now great experience of the workings of Washington, Ambassador to the USA. Letelier stayed there until 1973, when he was recalled to Chile to serve first as Foreign Minister and then as Minister of Interior. On the fateful day of the coup Letelier was Minister of Defence, technically the commander of the generals who, rising in revolt, arrested him at his ministry and later imprisoned him for a year on a remote island.

After his release in 1974, Letelier went into exile in the USA and from there worked tirelessly for the cause of a free Chile. Although not one of the most prominent of the original Popular Unity officials, and from a strongly bourgeois background, he used his skill and determination, and that discipline he had learned in the military academy, to become one of the most active of the exile leaders. It was his success in disrupting international banking support for Chile and his apparent ability to keep the factions of the opposition together that led Pinochet to have him slain.

Orlando Letelier was, by any standards, an exceptional man, propelled to prominence both by his own abilities and courage and by the events that so contorted his country in the 1970s. He had certain qualities, as all of us who worked with him in the Transnational



Institute and IPS can testify, that were especially striking, being those that in the grimness of struggle are all too often forgotten. One was an immense enjoyment of life, a sense of energy and warmth that touched all who had the pleasure of meeting him. Another was a powerful ability to combine high-level and long-term political vision with an attention to the smallest detail of everyday administration. Where too many on the left are afflicted by pessimism or careless of the requirements of everyday management, Letelier, who had as much excuse as anyone for neglecting cheerfulness and meticulousness, represented them in the most contagious manner. A third quality was his patriotism: a cosmopolitan in culture, an internationalist in politics, and someone who knew how to work in the realms of international finance and diplomacy, he remained quintessentially Chilean in his personal expression and enjoyment and in his devotion to the cause of the Chilean people. The man who had betrayed his class, and who paid for this betrayal with his life, refused to accept the military regime's decree, announced a few days before his death, that stripped him of his citizenship. He was born a Chilean and would die one, he announced; the generals were born traitors and would die as such.

The story of the investigation into the assassinations is one that Letelier himself would have appreciated, since it illustrates the ways in which a sustained political project can make an impression upon the US and Chilean states. Against the pessimistic view of those who argued that there was no point in collaborating with the FBI and the US Justice Department, Saul Landau and his associates tried to push the issue into the open and won the cooperation of the investigating agents of the US state. Just as sections of the US state were reaching out into civil society to recruit support for a cover-up, with the CIA feeding misleading stories to *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post*, so the IPS-TNI team reached into the state to find allies in the FBI, and later in the State Department. In the end, it was this alliance which prevailed, pinning the blame for the deaths of Letelier and Moffitt on the Chilean secret police DINA and bringing some of the conspirators to trial.

The parallel to the divisions within the US state is the shifting pattern of alliances inside Chile itself. Landau and Dinges give a unique insight into the relative independence from the rest of the Chilean state enjoyed by Pinochet, enabling him to use a hardline killer like Contreras to run DINA and then, later, once DINA had served its function, to dismiss Contreras and rely more upon the bankers and industrialists. The latter supported the regime and rejected the Christian Democrats, but were more attuned to the pressures coming from Washington.

The relations between Chile and the USA are one of the most engrossing themes of the book and demonstrate the limits of how far the US state would go. Although some of the conspirators were

expelled from Chile to face trial in the US, the main DINA officials involved were not, and the US government refused to pursue the case further, even suppressing documents that would have shown how far DINA and the CIA collaborated. In a terse epilogue, the two authors also examine how far the US government had foreknowledge that the DINA was planning some operation in the US in September 1976; they prove how this information was put on one side and kept secret for the first months of the investigation. A substantial crisis in US-Chilean relations did take place, but both the CIA and Pinochet were able to prevent the scandal from going too far.

The book is generous and understanding about some of the other personalities in the story: not only FBI agent Cornick, who doggedly pursued the killers despite his anti-communist prejudices, and US Ambassador to Chile Landau, an aristocratic Austrian-born diplomat who hammered at the Chileans, but also Ines Callejas de Townley, the wife of the chief murderer, Michael Townley, whose right-wing idealism and hatred of anti-semitism made her so uneasy in the criminal Cuban milieu in which her husband moved. One aspect of the story is, however, still not painted satisfactorily, namely the real role of the US in the Popular Unity period. For, despite all the revelations about the CIA and ITT, and the obvious convergence of Chilean military and US interests, it is still not clear how much the CIA concretely contributed to destabilising Chile and to the coup of September 1973. Given the demobilising weight that conspiracy theories about the CIA can have, in Chile and Iran, as in Greece, and Brazil, the authors' rather too easy account of the US role in the Chilean counter-revolution is a disappointment. We know what the CIA, Nixon and ITT set out to do, and we know that the Popular Unity government was destabilised and ultimately overthrown. What is much less clear, however, is how far those intentions in Washington were what *actually* led to the course of events in Chile. Yet such a precise and realistic appraisal would be most helpful in avoiding both a facile underestimation of the CIA's role, and an exaggerated demonic portrayal of its abilities.

The assassination of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt has had a political significance far beyond the tragedy of their deaths and the revulsion which this provoked. As with the murder of the Moroccan trade unionist and Tricontinental organiser Mehdi Ben Barka in Paris in 1965 (by Moroccan agents in league with the French intelligence service SDECE) it served to highlight the complicity between the secret services of a metropolitan state and the dictatorships at home against which the victims were struggling. Both Ben Barka and Letelier were too dynamic, too intelligent and too successful in their work to be allowed to live. In Letelier's case, his death also gave an indication of the dormant rightist trends within the US state which have now come so much to the fore and which have sought to calumnify him as a



foreign agent. Whereas documents in his briefcase showed how the exile network of the Chilean Socialist Party was sending him funds via their bank account in Havana, the US right-wing media have tried to whitewash Pinochet and the CIA by making out that Letelier was some kind of Cuban 'agent'. Their reaction to *Assassination on Embassy Row* has been a frenzied attempt to discredit the Chilean left and the Institute for which Letelier worked, indicating that the issues raised by Landau and Dinges' investigation continue to hurt.

Transnational Institute

FRED HALLIDAY

*Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*

By MARTIN A. KLEIN (Beverly Hills and London, Sage Publications, 1980). 319pp. Cloth £12.50, paper £6.25

*Peasants in Africa* may at first confuse a general reader with its complex terminology and fragmented factual material from widely divergent parts of the continent, but it can also provide much stimulus for further reading and consideration. The last few years have witnessed a flood of compilations put together by left-wing Africanists. This is the fourth released in the Sage Series on African modernisation and development, which is becoming less diffuse and increasingly valuable. The theme of the book links it closely to Palmer and Parsons' *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (1977); indeed, three of its nine contributors (Bundy, Jewsiewicki, Muntemba) wrote pieces for that collection. The principal difference lies in Martin Klein's West African bias, which brings into a similar framework new regions and problems. The most critical point to be made about *Peasants in Africa* is really generic: however valuable the individual contributions, is it best to place them within the covers of a book which by its nature cannot contain too developed a problematic? Is the current emphasis on this kind of format justified?

Martin Klein's introduction does not entirely lend weight to a positive response. Useful in describing themes from his selections and other writings on the African peasantry and containing some fine insights on the impact of capitalist social and economic relations in Africa, it remains an empirically conceived survey of the literature. Klein writes very awkwardly at times as he tries to fit marxist analysis into this conventional social science pattern. Yet the individual pieces selected are mostly very valuable. The best aspect of the collection is its presentation of fresh research (several of the writers have been almost or entirely available previously only in French), showing the rapid transformation of African studies in recent years.

The impact of capitalism on the African peasantry has followed lines

already well conceived elsewhere in the world: individuation of land tenure and other social forms, growing differentiation within the rural population and between regions, exploitative relations established by urban, largely foreign-based industry mediated through colonial conquest and policy, ecological deterioration, problematic changes in the relations of men and women, and the throwing up of an ever-expanding reserve army of labour. However, outside the far south, no regime thus far has been able to transform Africa along the classic 'English' or 'Prussian' roads of nineteenth-century Europe. Consequently, African peasantries exist in a continuing state of complex change if overall decline, with conditions varying greatly from country to country. *Peasants in Africa* suggests this complexity effectively.

One striking aspect of this book is the concern for periodisation and emphasis on an historical approach by virtually all contributors. Another is their retreat from broad structural terminology of the kind associated with Althusser and other recent marxist philosophers. Most of the authors focus on the particular and clearly find analysis at the level of mode of production of limited use. Julian Clarke's essay on land tenure in south-western Nigeria is notable for its attack on Althusserian premises, and, although one can quarrel with his too comfortable retreat into empiricism, it is a fascinating piece. Bogumil Jewsiewicki's contribution provides the most structuralist analysis, but this is possibly because the author has taken on the biggest unit, the whole of Zaire, as his subject. An examination of Jewsiewicki and Clarke reveals two contrasting ways of looking at capitalist transformation: on the one hand, the manipulation of peasant society by the state and, on the other, a stress on peasant generation of social change. This sharp divide requires elucidation and further critical analysis and confrontation in the course of research and writing. In his essay on Senegal, Jean Copans is particularly effective at interweaving the two themes, while foreseeing an intensifying depeasantisation as the bureaucracy subjects the rural population more and more directly to its will and out-migration continues. He appears to see little prospect of peasants fighting back.

The final contribution, William Beinart and Colin Bundy on the South African Transkei, contrasts with the rest in providing a history of peasant resistance. The authors, by raising politically acute questions of consciousness and culture integrated with an awareness of the changing social structures, yield a major historical analysis. The excellent work the contributors to this volume have produced needs to move in this direction, whether in the course of focussed in-depth studies that benefit from but move beyond social reconstruction, or to theoretically able general works that try to place together the findings of volumes such as the one under review. In one graphic sentence, Eliane de Latour Dejean, writing on the Mawri country of Niger,



epitomises the quality of this volume at its best: 'The circulation of money is a sort of whirlwind that strips the poor as it passes, while giving to the rich in abundance.'

Harvard University

BILL FREUND

### *The Kampuchean Connection*

By C.M. GOMES (London, Grassroots Publisher, 1980). 173pp Paper £2.75

When I was young I read a book entitled *Give a dog a bad name*. Both that title and the book are much in my mind when I think of Kampuchea and the Khmer Rouge.

C.M. Gomes brings reason and analysis into a discussion often befuddled by emotionalism, hysteria and venom. He challenges those who by name-calling have sought to hang the Khmer Rouge – Barron and Paul with their CIA connections, Father Ponchaud and John Pilger. He does not abuse them, indeed he finds Ponchaud 'compassionate', but he does accuse them of indifference to evidence, acceptance of inventions such as 'Year Zero' and uncritical repetition of any anti-Khmer Rouge tale they were told. (As he does not deal in detail with the Vietnamese invasion and consequent famine the section on Pilger is inadequate.)

The book is in the form of letters to a British worker. This helps its argument and makes for easy reading. But it is, nonetheless, a sound and serious piece of work. After a brief discussion of the people and their country, it sets out in more detail the history of the past twelve years. By far the most impressive and authoritative chapters are those on 1970-75 and on the evacuation of Phnom Penh, both of which make much use of western material. Far from slaughtering three million people, as has been alleged, the Khmer Rouge saved three million by that evacuation, very properly called 'a journey away from certain death' by a *New York Times* reporter. Indeed, the Americans had set up a situation in which they calculated it would be impossible for any new Khmer government to avoid at least a million deaths. Any serious discussion of Kampuchea must start from that, and pay tribute to the Khmer Rouge for preventing such a catastrophe by the evacuation and their efforts to revive the economy. This is the reality of Kampuchea, and not the silent skulls, so often pictured, which, could they speak, would tell of US bombs, Vietnamese invasion and the operations of anti-Khmer Rouge units.

Of course, as Gomes says, the Khmer Rouge did commit blunders. They had provided food depots on the evacuation routes, but

miscalculated the need for medical supplies and, out of foolish pride, rejected a French offer of help. They rightly saw the need to get people into the country, where there was at least some food, and to get them busy producing more, but failed to recognise that many middle- and upper-class people could not at once work day after day like peasants. And there were undoubtedly killings such as occur in and after liberation from a corrupt and tyrannous regime. In this respect, what happened in Kampuchea differed little from what happened in South Vietnam, or even in France in 1944-5. But the Khmer Rouge made the mistake that its ultra-left social policies alienated many who should and could have been its friends. All the same, it was basically offering life and such casualties as there were must be blamed primarily on the United States.

But the final desperate American bombing of Kampuchea was designed not only to leave the Kampucheans with an impossible problem, but so to weaken the country that there would for long be a temptation for the Vietnamese to invade, for Kissinger well understood the wishes of the more nationalistic of the Vietnamese leaders. Into this American trap the Vietnamese eventually fell, and it should be the task of their friends to help them out, not drive them in deeper.

Here I have a grumble: this point is blurred by Gomes, who, intent on piling blame on the Soviet Union, fails to see the role of the US. Indeed, his efforts at times to work in a conspiracy theory of history make me wonder if the mistake of the Khmer Rouge in ignoring the precept to multiply friends and reduce enemies has yet been fully learnt. Nevertheless, this book is valuable; it is necessary reading for all who wish to understand Kampuchea; it fills a real gap. No doubt better books will be written later, but at last this opens the way to a truer and more serious discussion of the issue.

Ripon, Yorks

ARTHUR CLEGG

### *Whirlwind before the Storm*

By ALAN BROOKS and JEREMY BRICKHILL (London, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980). 369pp. Paper £4

### *South Africa: white rule, black revolt*

By ERNEST HARSCH (New York, Monad Press, 1980). 352pp. Paper £3.95

After the dramatic mass struggles of the Sharpeville period (1960-62), which shook the social fabric of South Africa, the liberation movement, its ranks decimated by state repression, descended into the marshlands of political quiescence.



Thanks to the massive inflow of foreign capital from 1963, the country experienced an economic boom, which lasted for a decade. An expanding economy provided the government with funds to strengthen the military and police forces and speed up the implementation of the Bantustan policy.

In terms of Bantustans, the government contrived to fragment the oppressed along racial as well as tribal lines, and foster the creation of a small black middle class, which would have a stake in the perpetuation of apartheid, and furnish a social prop for the regime. The overriding consideration of the ruling classes, in creating Bantustans as the only permanent residence for the Africans, is to inhibit the creation of a stable and organised working class in the cities. For such an urban social force posed a threat to the capitalist system.

Still, concomitant with the development of centrifugal forces at the political level, there took place the growth of centripetal forces at the economic level. More to the point, rapid industrialisation during the 1960s had led to the absorption of larger layers of blacks into the economy. The blacks continued to be urbanised and proletarianised. The South African historical egg could not be unscrambled, Bantustans notwithstanding. The growth of the black wage-earning class was portentous. By the early 1970s, it had come to occupy a more important place in the labour process and to feel its growing strength.

The partial collapse of the Congress movements had left a vacuum in the liberation movement. It was filled by a new generation of fighters, who were growing, or had grown up, in the post-Sharpeville era. Composed of school pupils and university students, of academics and workers, they established various legal and illegal groups. These were of a political and cultural, a trade union and artistic character. Encapsulated finally as the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), these organisations became a powerful social force in the early 1970s.

The two books under brief review do not tell us how the BCM questioned many of the basic assumptions and presuppositions of African nationalism. To begin with, the new leaders rejected the traditional view that the four race groups constituted national groups: instead they regarded all blacks as constituting a nation, one and indivisible. Second, they turned away from the christian-liberal assumptions of the old nationalism and called for a 'return to the source': the black past had to be studied for revolutionary reconstruction, black culture promoted to create a new political man. Third, the liberation of the black man, they argued, depended on his own efforts. The white man, in this perspective, was largely irrelevant: so too were his institutions, especially those devised to coopt and divide the blacks.

Black exclusivism and solidarity, black culture and dignity – these were the essential prerequisites to give the oppressed what they most needed: a heightened political consciousness, confidence in their own

strength and a commitment to radical change. True, aspirant middle-class elements did use the BCM initially to promote a cultural nationalism, serving as ideological justification for black capitalism. Even so, the accent on the widest unity of the blacks helped to overcome the crippling legacy of racialism and tribalism and ensure that the working-class majority put their stamp on the content of the struggle.

The world recession of the early 1970s brought South Africa's economic boom to an end. Ernest Harsch in *South Africa: white rule, black revolt* shows how, in the face of mounting inflation, the black workers were forced to embark on strikes for a living wage and for trade union rights. What is more, new technological processes conspired, together with the recession, to render some two million blacks unemployed. Many of them exhibited a fresh militancy in the townships. But more important was the sharpening class struggle ushered in by those black workers who, having come to play key roles in the production process, could now fight and negotiate from a position of strength. At the same time, the BCM had drawn into active political struggle the pupils and students in schools and universities. They drew inspiration, Ernest Harsch points out, from the successful struggles in Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe. The liberation movement had clawed its way out of the marshlands and reached the plateau of mass mobilisation and resolute struggle.

In an attempt to deal with the growing national and class struggles, the government resolved to press ahead with the completion of Bantustan education. In other words, the black pupils were to be forced into the Procrustean bed of tribalism. Brooks and Brickhill in *Whirlwind before the Storm* describe at some length the coercive methods which were used to bring the pupils to heel. The government offensive came at a time of heightened political consciousness and mass activity. The upshot was mass pupil resistance, which culminated in the uprisings of 1976.

*Whirlwind before the Storm* is a day-to-day account of the 1976 events. In that year black school pupils took the centre of the political stage and continued to occupy it to the present. Their tribal education is at once ideologically repressive, repugnant to their political ideals and useless in a modern world. This accounts for their protracted resistance. The world now knows that they combined with the workers, late in 1976, to stage the greatest political strike in the history of the liberation movement. Since the Soweto events of 1976, the struggle reached new levels of intensity and in 1980 the school pupils resumed their struggle with a fury that amazed the world. In short, the mass movement, initiated in 1976, despite setbacks and retreats, has not been defeated.

The mass struggle, now in the fifth year, raises cardinal theoretical and ideological questions which these two books fail to raise for



discussion. Why has the struggle largely been waged on the terrain of education? Why have school pupils, as distinct from university students, played the leading and dominant role in the fight against apartheid? How do we explain the singular alliance of pupils and workers? Answers to these questions are essential to understand this new revolutionary phase in the Azanian liberation struggle.

London

KEN JORDAAN

*Dread: the Rastafarians of Jamaica*

By JOSEPH OWENS (London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1979). 280pp. Paper £3.50

This book is the product of lengthy reasonings carried on between Rastafari brethren from the slum quarters of west Kingston and Father Joseph Owens (priest and social worker) during the years (1970-72) that he was resident there. The first thing that strikes you as you pick up the book is the incessant beat of 'Dread' right through the chapter headings – demanding attention. It is an attentiveness that the author himself shows in trying to get behind the symbols of Rastafarianism and to capture the experience of Dread. And this he has succeeded in doing – to a large extent. No doubt this has much to do with what Father Owen takes to be the fundamental principle of ethnographic studies: 'the only legitimate exposition of another person's religious faith is in terms and propositions that the other person can understand and accept. *No other approach is justified.*' This principle was constantly reinforced by the Rasta Brethren themselves: 'Write as if you were a Rasta yourself! Make people think that you are in fact a Rasta!'

Because Father Owens does not attempt to explain away or reinterpret what the Brethren have said, but rather allows his text to be guided by Rastafarian knowledge as expounded throughout by the Rasses themselves, certain interesting and important elements of that knowledge are allowed to come through. Necessarily, the book deals with the social, economic and political circumstances within which Rastafarianism has emerged and developed; but, more importantly, it shows quite clearly how Rastafarianism is implacably opposed to the neo-colonial and imperialist policies and interventions which have created and continue to create such conditions of existence.

*Dread* lays the myth that Rastafarianism is essentially a 'millenarian cult', interested only in individual spiritual salvation, its members waiting passively for the millenium – though the tension between its metaphysical and materialist elements has always been plain to see. From its inception, Rastas have argued that 'what is needed today is international salvation, not individual salvation', and throughout the

book Rastas roundly condemn the notion that God is 'in the sky'. For them, Jah is a living god and, in so far as they talk about forces for 'Good' and 'Evil', they speak of these as existing and being made manifest in and through human beings. They are concrete realities. 'It is only man can change the unscrupulous systems and conditions under which we live at present.' If people can be said to think about life in a wrong way then this, for the Rastafarian, is not so much a fault of the individual as a consequence of the system in which he or she lives — a system with 'money' at its centre, based on economic power, maintained by military might and cemented ideologically, its purpose the extraction of profit by the exploitation of the masses.

The portrayal of the Rastafarian's subtle understanding that power cannot be maintained simply by force and that the 'Church-ical/State-ical' power complex must continually seek to capture people's hearts and minds, thereby winning the people's compliance to their own subjugation, is one of the high points of the book. But if it has its high points, it also has its lows. Early on, we learn that 'although there are female Rastas, they are relatively invisible'; nowhere is that more so than in this book. While there is a hint that there has been a qualitative change in 'female/male' relationships, it singularly fails to deal with the Rasta woman as woman. You will search in vain for any perspective on how 'Babylon' exploits and oppresses her, and what, in relation to that, Rastafarianism means for her as a black woman.

This is not the only absence in the book — only the most glaring. Still it must provide at least a partial antidote to some of the noxious sociological outpourings we have been subjected to of late.

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E. LAWRENCE

### *Tales of Mozambique*

Compiled by CHAZ DAVIES, RUHI HAMID and CHRIS SEARLE  
(London, Young World Books, 313-15 Caledonian Road, London N1,  
1980). 74pp. np.

When I was nine years old, a travelling salesman came to our house with a brochure for Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopaedia*. He talked to my mother, then came back in the evening and sat by the fire talking to my father. I should pass my 11+, the whole world of knowledge would be mine, on an instalment plan, one volume at a time. I was entranced, my hard-up parents had no choice. I still have the ten volumes on an oak book-shelf that my father made specially. Since then, I have looked at Arthur Mee far more critically; but I have still been able to forgive him much of his obtrusive, sentimental jingoism and naive



moralising for what was to me the chief and lasting delight of those volumes – their collection of ‘Tales, myths and legends from many lands’: Br’er Rabbit, Monkey and Pig, Ashputtel, Rumpelstiltskin, Aesop’s fables; giants, turtles, witches, woodcutters, elephants and much else besides. They were tales that intrigued and fascinated; sometimes the moral was puzzling, not to be quite understood, even ambiguous. But above all, they were strange, giving off a flavour of countries and histories and ways of life quite different from that of working-class London in Coronation year.

*Tales from Mozambique* will delight and excite children in much the same way, with its mixture of traditional stories and modern fables, of animal and human characters. Wit and skill outfox (for the European symbol of cunning is Reynard, and not, as here, the rabbit) strength and stupidity – sometimes even honesty. The weak and the small – organised – are more than a match for the powerful and ferocious. Greed often (though not quite always) proves its own undoing. The animals are peasants working in the fields, or living in the forest. Sometimes they combine against good-for-nothing hyena landlords, or teach each other a lesson about the need to work if you want to eat. The stories can equally well be read aloud – maybe with additional dramatic embellishments, for this is a collection that should be used – or read to oneself.

But this is also a book to be looked at, dwelt on as much as read through. Children love pictures, the more intricate, the more varied, the more dramatic the better (only sophisticated adults can, I think, really appreciate that plain, pared-down style that so often passes as excellent in today’s children’s books). And the drawings here are superb; all exciting, but as different in style and temperament as might be expected from a group of artists who come from all over the world. Text and pictures are well integrated, the book as a whole beautifully designed. One minor cavil is that there is too much adult explanation of what the book is for – but this matters little, since the book’s readers will go straight to its essence.

What the collection does as a whole lack, though, is that terrible cruelty that would keep you awake at night, wondering about the little girl whose punishment for thinking vain thoughts in church about her new shoes was to dance till her feet were bleeding stumps, dance till she was glad to die; or about the children who wandered into the forest to be killed and eaten – or worse; or about the man who killed and skinned his grandmother. It is a good lack.

Institute of Race Relations

HAZEL WATERS

*Race, IQ and Jensen*

By JAMES R. FLYNN (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).  
313pp. Cloth £10.50

Flynn has written a very curious book. There is no doubt which side he wants to be on, but I suspect that for two major reasons many of us will want to disavow him. For one of these reasons, I am sure we will be right. I am not so certain about the other.

Flynn's aim is to show that the main evidence on race and IQ does not support Jensen's case. He wants to do this because he is convinced that the racist case cannot survive without at least a pretension to factual support. He finds two typical arguments in Jensen's writings: a claim of high heritability of IQ within and between populations; and a series of disproofs of all the specific hypotheses of environmental handicaps for blacks. If proven, these would add up, he believes, to a very powerful case. He argues in great detail, much of it statistical, that the evidence does not support either.

I think Flynn is best seen as a friend of sorts within the enemy's camp, adding to the fifth column work of people such as Leon Kamin. That he shares much with the enemy is shown by his insistence on talking of 'genes for IQ'. He regularly uses concepts such as 'white genotypes' and 'black genotypes'. It can be of some use to us to have someone who operates within such a reductionist framework showing that the racist argument still doesn't work. We can even make use of Flynn's mode of argument for certain logical purposes. Our arguments then take the form of saying: 'Accepting Jensen's assumptions just for purposes of testing, what should follow?' What can then be demonstrated is the internal incoherence and the failures of evidence in his approach. For such an exercise, it is useful to know that studies of different degrees of 'white' inheritance have failed to correlate with variations in IQ.

But Flynn's assumptions will not do in themselves. Having thanked him for his review of the evidence, we must part company with him. There are just too many problems and dangers with the whole Jensenite concept of a 'g' or general intelligence; and we should not become entangled in arguing whether or not it is genetically determined.

I find it revealing that in his discussion of the question of test-validity, Flynn nowhere mentions – to me, a crucial piece of evidence – the lack of stability of IQ-tests over time. Testing and re-testing, testing at different ages, administration of different tests over time, all tend to show marked inconsistencies of results. This is evidence for a definite conclusion – intelligence has, by nature, a historical character. We *develop* intelligence. We build on previous experience, we learn concepts and how to apply them. The idea of abstracting one hour of a testee's life – setting aside all questions of artificial test-situation, age,



authority, race, sex of tester, conditions of test, etc. – to discover a genotypic *or* phenotypic intelligence is absurd. This is something which Binet, the founder of intelligence testing, understood. He was appalled when his methods were used for more than calculating at-the-time achievements in specified types of tasks.

Flynn ought to be aware of the dangers of saying that a phenylketonuric child has a ‘poor genotype for IQ’ (phenylketonuria being a genetically-borne deficiency which can cause brain damage in children). Its idiocy is logically comparable to saying that someone with half a brain shot away has a ‘poor environment for IQ’. Strictly, intelligence is neither phenotypic nor genotypic. It is an interactive self-developing capacity for which there are phenotypic and genotypic benefits and disadvantages.

But the other aspect of Flynn’s case is also important. He argues that we need to be able to specify what the environmental disadvantages are, and not merely declare that they *must* be environmental. He thinks – I do not agree – that Jensen’s case against existing proposals of environmental barriers is overwhelming. He therefore dismisses socio-economic status, racism, prenatal environment, low self-image or motivation as untenable, mainly on grounds that they would not have even effects across the black community. In their place, he cites evidence that might seem to suggest that the blame lies primarily within black culture itself. (He is careful to say that this culture is obviously the result of racism.) There is no stimulus he asserts, to academic achievement within black communities; verbal interactions tend not to be of a sort to encourage abstract thinking, and so on. He concludes – and herein lies the positive challenge of his case – ‘I take the naive view that an unjust and deleterious environment damages one’s capacities as well as one’s opportunities.’

Here he has let something nasty hit the fan. Labov’s experiments on black language show unequivocally that black conceptualisation is as complex and as capable of handling abstractions as dominant white language-forms. But it is matched to the needs and patterns of organisation in the black community. It is this fact that makes Flynn’s admission that black culture ‘derives from white racism’ just a little ritualistic. It did not simply derive from it; it was formed in resistance against it. If black culture contains a refusal to accommodate to white education in many ways, it is because white education has been refusing blacks. Flynn’s failure is to think that racism is some unidimensional problem for blacks, like flu, whereas it is more like a pervasive influence in many departments of their lives.

Nevertheless, I remain heretic enough to think that Flynn’s case is significant in one respect. There is every reason to think that racism *can* damage capacities as well as opportunities (indeed, that is one reason why we must oppose the easy slogan ‘equality of opportunity’).

It can obviously happen when malnutrition causes brain malformation. Why should it not happen also through impoverishment of environment? A culture is built out of seeing collective opportunities for using environments. That must put great pressures, including the possibility of some distortions, on cultures formed in a racist environment. I think that Flynn's argument is good enough to warn us against a sloppy romanticism about black cultures. They are cultures of *resistance*, but not yet of *victory*. What will be achieved culturally after the overthrow of racist capitalism will beggar the present. It will also be the final living proof of the absurdity of genotypic limits to intelligence, in both black and white.

Bristol Polytechnic

MARTIN BARKER

*Psychodynamics of Race: vicious and benign spirals*

By RAE SHERWOOD (Brighton, Harvester Press, 1980). 590pp. np.

Rae Sherwood's book makes depressing reading, not because it contains any revelations but because its parameters, concepts and methods exemplify with chilling self-confidence the growing tendency of 'researchers' to mould and manipulate the experiences of black people, with scant regard for anything but the dubious intellectual rigours of their academic disciplines. Sherwood has interviewed twelve parents and children from three families – English, Barbadian and Indian – who co-exist in a decaying area of inner London. Her aim is to scrutinise the 'psychodynamic misuse' of each other's racial groups which flows from their 'identity crises', and to illuminate the mechanics of 'man's inhumanity to man' as revealed in the internal processes of racial antipathy.

From the start she is determined to have her racial cake and eat it. Her disclaimers – 'in no sense are these families considered a representative sample of their respective groups' – are no obstacle to her facile and hasty generalisations about those groups – 'social and political realities have long inhibited Negroes and Afro-Caribbean peoples from openly expressing their negative feelings'.

To have written a book on this subject without a single reference to Fanon is in itself extraordinary, but not so surprising once it is discovered that Sherwood uses the concept of 'prejudice' to equate the feelings of the oppressor and the oppressed. These are seen as parallel expressions of 'identity crises' eternally reproduced in nuclear family relations, which are the limit of her vision. Her solution to racial conflicts follows directly from her perception of their origins as internal, psychological and personal.



What is required is the open ventilation and free discussion of racial prejudice in ways which lead to a widespread growth of insight in the community as to how these unresolved identity crises, to which we are all prone, manifest themselves and why they move as they do towards racial groups.

This 'ventilation' is a non-starter with the father of the white family who is an avowed fascist, and Sherwood never says *why* the move against (which is how she uses towards) other '*racial* groups' (my emphasis) takes place. Because race cannot be grasped sufficiently as a variable in individual psychologies, she has problems preventing its specificities from deserting her account altogether; she admits that 'many of us use the same processes but work them out through other social groups'. Sherwood remains blind to the fact that different racisms develop historically, and her concepts will only permit her to grapple with this problem at a level so nebulous as to be devoid of all meaning. 'Racial prejudice occurs so universally and is so widespread in different societies that it clearly serves a psychological need.' The data from the interviews finally forces her to concede the existence of 'social ideology', but without a sense of its *materiality*, its levels, complexities and contradictions. At every point, where the extra-psychological determinations on the individual intrude, she retreats hastily to the cosy confines of psychodynamic orthodoxy, to which each chapter adds another layer of insulation.

If her theory of racial misuse were to mean anything, it would have surely operated to disrupt the racial interaction in her interviews themselves, distorting her 'observations' beyond all usefulness. Without wanting to support her general argument, I am sure that the operation of racial power has accomplished something of this sort, as her black interviewees have expressed an unusual degree of affection for white Britain and an equally exceptional amount of hostility to their fellow blacks.

Sherwood tactfully admits that she and her team must have brought their own prejudices to bear on the project, though sadly she neglects to tell the reader what these were. The variety of liberal racism which not only acknowledges the Asian mother's difficulties with the English language but persists in interviewing her in that language provides one of many clues. I could go on: the liberal tone of the book is punctuated by the sinister comparison of human and animal aggression, by pseudo socio-biological jargon, like 'the territoriality of identity', and also by the implication that with a nurturant *mother* in attendance, one is less likely to grow up to be a bigot. Though the interview material cries out for it, there is no apprehension of gender-based power relations in the domestic setting, nor of the complexities of the race/class nexus.

To say that this book tells anything about race is to cock a snook at

the black communities of this country. It is notable for little more than the fact that this time the familiar mosaic of academic racist stereotyping – once again dressed up as ‘theory’ – has been assembled from the words of black people themselves. Read Sherwood by all means, but read her as a cautionary tale, an unpalatable lesson in the failings of researchers who think they can appropriate our struggles with impunity from the citadels of their academic speciality. She has failed to comprehend anything about race, racism, oppression, struggle or liberation and has entombed herself in the process.

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PAUL GILROY

*Microelectronics: capitalist technology and the working class*

By the CSE MICROELECTRONICS GROUP (London, CSE Books, 1980). 152pp. Cloth £8, paper £2.95

The stream of TV programmes, books and publications about the microelectronic revolution and its consequences will inevitably provoke the comment from many people, ‘Not another book on microelectronics!’ But if that reaction stops people reading this book, then it is a pity. Because the CSE Microelectronics Group has produced a timely and informative investigation of the role that new technology plays within the social and economic relations of capitalism in Britain today.

The book, in content as well as form, is about struggle. Its theme is that capital needs to increase productivity in order to increase profits and, at the same time, to regain command over the labour process; technology plays a key role in this process. Chapter by chapter the book outlines the main applications of the new automation, highlighting the defensive struggles that are already occurring. All good stuff and very easy to read.

But it is the form this material takes that deserves the real tribute. In one of the chapters the Group writes: ‘Discussion of the impact of microelectronics, like debates on nuclear energy or the siting of the third London Airport, are extremely inaccessible to the very people whose lives are affected by the outcome.’ More than anything else, this book is an attempt to take the facts and the debate to the very people whose lives are likely to be most affected by the new technology.

A conscious effort has obviously been made to stay as empirical and factual as possible, to avoid futurology and to deal with the organisational changes that are taking place in offices and factories now. Office workers, engineers, miners and others will recognise the terrain and the book should provide useful ammunition in the struggle for control of the work process.



One lesson is rammed home again and again: capital uses technology to regulate and contain and repress working-class struggle; in particular, this is achieved by the fragmentation and deskilling of work. In the US, where office automation and the use of word processors is more advanced than in Europe, the number of lower skilled machine-operating jobs has increased. The gap between the top jobs and the low-level, low-paid jobs has increased. Invariably the latter are performed by black women.

Racism is clearly visible to anyone who walks through a big office company. Pretty young white women work as private secretaries in the carpeted offices of the new downtown buildings. Black clericals are mainly reserved for the keypunch room, the typing pool, or the data processing centre across town – the routine, pressurised, low-paid jobs.

New technology increases polarisation of the workforce, and so increases the control of management.

The book's introduction implies that this is only a first look at the issues arising from microelectronic technology. Certainly, it is by no means comprehensive. Readers of this journal might be disappointed to find no discussion at all about the global implications of the new technology. This is an omission, particularly as many key sectors, some of which, like the motor industry, are dealt with in the book, are experiencing the effects of this now. The new technology plays a key role in capital's ability to abandon nationally integrated production, in favour of global integration and a new international division of labour. Failure to deal with these issues is to miss one of the key features of the new technology, and a feature that capital has been quick to exploit.

Counter Information Services

BILL RIDGERS

### *They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee*

Edited by DICK CLUSTER (Boston, South End Press, 1979). 266p. £2.95

*They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee* is a fascinating anthology of reminiscences about the radical 1960s. It goes beyond the mere anecdotal into the more ambitious arena of considered political judgement. What might have been a collection of interesting but disconnected recollections has been selected with sufficient care to enable at least some of it to add up to a coherent body of considered wisdom.

Bearnice Reagon, for instance, demonstrates notable perspicacity when she gives not only a description of the concrete desegregative

achievements of the 1960's agitators, but also surmises that 'the Civil Rights Movement exposed the basic structure of the country that, as it's set up, cannot sustain itself without oppressing someone'. Jean Smith, similarly, goes further than a recount of obvious improvements to impart a realisation that black people have not achieved economic equality even though they have acquired 'rights'. She also notes that Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were both assassinated just when they were denouncing capitalism and attacking general poverty as well as racism. These contributions occur in the first section, which is written by black activists, and it is the most powerful part of the book.

The second section focuses on white radicalism, and although it does include some illuminating judgements on both civil rights and Vietnam, it leaves an overall impression of somewhat facile hindsight. The questioning approach of Dick Cluster, the editor, is the most fresh and open-minded; the others seem to lack any fundamental stimulus. The last section revolves around women's liberation and is curiously naive. No doubt it 'was all just terribly exciting and important', but this account does not make it seem so. It is redeemed by some of its more analytic conclusions linking sexism with class and capitalism and laying the origin of doubts about the possibility of equality within the American Dream at the door of the Civil Rights Movement.

There is a brief overall conclusion by the editor that over-optimistically assumes that the United States has begun to lose its fear of socialism and marxism. More realistic is the awareness that any changes that have taken place as a consequence of the radical 1960s have not involved any transfer of power and can be reversed whenever it seems expedient. However, Cluster then confuses this clarity by stating that many of the fundamental issues dividing Americans are not economic. Of course they are not, but he fails to see that the decision-making process is a product of particular economic power structures and until these are dismantled alternative ways of approaching problems can never be wholly successful.

University of Keele

MARY ELLISON

*Owing to extreme pressure on space in this issue, Books received is being held over till the next issue.*



The following recent back issues of *Race & Class* are available from The Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Road, London N1

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