

RACE & CLASS

Race and the press in

Thatcher's Britain

NANCY MURRAY

The legacy of Amilcar Cabral

BASIL DAVIDSON

Sociobiology and the new right

Black English USA

Race & Madness

by MARY KENNY

Race row head 'is victim of vendetta'

Bowing to the mob

Children are being pumped full of nonsense about race

White victims of racial humbug

Lesson in race

'We have tyrannical and racism now... black racism?'

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Anti-racists and other demons: the press and ideology in Thatcher's Britain

Ever since Enoch Powell first inveighed against Britain's black population, the press has given his forays inordinate attention. The xenophobic fears and racist stereotypes which constitute 'Powellism' – seeing black people in terms of an alien influx which has violated the deepest instincts of a formerly homogeneous people – had become part of a press-created 'common sense' about race long before Margaret Thatcher gave them political respectability in her 'swamping' speech of January 1978. Since then, Powell's racial interpretation of the nation, with its imagined unity and Burkean reverence for tradition, as well as his supposition that it is 'natural' to want to be with one's 'own kind' and protect home territory from the incursions of strangers, have found a home in the range of national papers, in the polite prose of the *Guardian* as well as the virulent right-wing gutter press.¹

But three years after the Falklands War quite a specific aspect of Powellism has been systematically taken up by most sections of the press.² In his notorious 'River Tiber' speech of 20 April 1968, and again, two years later in his Birmingham election speech of 13 June, when he sounded the alarm against Britain's 'enemies within', Powell had targeted a dangerous aggressive minority of 'immigrants' and their supporters, who were determined to 'consolidate their members, to agitate and campaign against their fellow citizens, to overawe and dominate the rest'³ – leaving 'the rest', the white majority, without a sense of who they are, and

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what is their rightful heritage. By the mid 1980s this 'dangerous minority' who sought to oppress the majority had been given a name: they were the 'anti-racists', a catch-all term applied to any person or group who sought to combat the racist practices of white society, or who embraced the pluralist creed of 'multiculturalism' in the hope that cultural pluralism was, in itself, an antidote to racism. For the past two years anti-racism and cultural pluralism have been the objects of an organised press offensive, culminating in the revelation that racism is something which black people inflict on white. In the process, an unashamedly racist 'white culturalism' has been summoned forth, as if in this way the sickly national 're-birth' which took place in the South Atlantic could be indefinitely prolonged.

For the Thatcherite right to use 'race' as the focus of a cohering patriotism is simply to be true to its Powellian heritage – there is nothing particularly new in this. But what is new is the emphasis on rolling back the gains of anti-racism in the name of traditional freedoms, national pride and the liberation of the white majority: a development which makes sense given the wider political context. For Thatcherite ideology, which promised to deliver Britain from the bonds of a moribund paternalism (old Tories) and welfarism (Labour Party), is now looking distinctly frayed and shop-soiled. Monetarism has not only failed to provide a clinical solution to the pathology of social democracy but, with its deepening of social divisions, and acceleration of economic decline, it has come to seem a massive self-inflicted wound. The Falklands magic has faded, and it is becoming more difficult for the press to portray Margaret Thatcher as a resolute leader, clothed in Churchillian robes, who alone could arrest national decline and make the country 'great' again.⁴ As a sign of their increasing desperation, Tory image-makers at the recent Party conference urged the media to improve their 'presentation' as the only way to shore up an ailing ideology.

The media are therefore expected to provide what the government cannot deliver: convincing reasons why Thatcherism is on course, proof 'that the long years of retreat and self-doubt are over'.⁵ The government is relying on the media to 'market' not only specific policies, but the Thatcherite world view, with its dichotomies of good and evil, productive and non-productive, law-abiding and criminal. According to the new style of 'conviction politics', the government does not merely govern, but – animated by the spirit of British nationalism 'which has fired her for generations past'⁶ – it wages a regenerative war for the nation's moral well-being and economic salvation, and stands between the people and the prospect of naked lawlessness represented by the Labour Party. The media played a crucial role in the vanquishing of the 'external enemy' in the South Atlantic and in Thatcher's re-election: its continued support is essential if the loyal troops are to be kept in line and the battle against the 'enemy within' to be fought and won.⁷

In 1970 Powell had envisaged a two-pronged attack in the internal 'battle of Britain' – mounted, on the one hand, by those disruptive elements which used 'organised disorder' to undermine the morale of the police and the authority of the state and, on the other, by the dangerous, indoctrinating minority. By the mid-1980s Powell's war had become Thatcher's: his oppressed majority were preyed upon by the ever-enlarging ranks of the enemy within, and her press gendarmes had taken the offensive. On the other side were all the forces which weakened the body politic, and had to be contained by the law-and-order state – the criminals and hooligans, the scroungers and feckless unemployed, trade unionists and Labour Party activists, striking miners and peace campaigners, Greenham women and women wanting abortions, permissive parents and subversive teachers, anti-racists and urban rioters, left-wing extremists and professional agitators. And in the front line, where Powell had placed it, was 'race' with all its Powellian overtones: exploited to infuse the people with a sense of national identity and patriotism, and to create the climate in which the Tories would appear the sole and necessary defenders of the nation.

Thatcher's press cadres

During the Thatcher years, the political spectrum of the daily press, for some time the narrowest in western Europe, has contracted still further, with only the *Mirror* and the *Guardian* opposing the Tories (some of the time). This narrow political spectrum is one consequence of the most concentrated press ownership in the western world: four large conglomerates produce four-fifths of the daily output of nearly fifteen million papers, and most of the Sunday papers. Competition for the 80 per cent of the population who read a paper every day has more to do with style, pitch and marketing gimmicks, than with genuine differences of outlook. Among the tabloids, United's *Express* and *Star* compete for midmarket and working-class readers with Associated's *Mail*, Maxwell's *Mirror* and Murdoch's *Sun* (with a daily circulation of four million, the largest selling paper in the West). The 'quality' papers compete for different age groups among the middle and upper classes, with *The Times* under Murdoch wooing the young professionals and businessmen, the *Telegraph* the old, and the *Financial Times* the more 'enlightened' capitalists, while the *Guardian* has its 'liberal' market of half-a-million readers all to itself.

Since the 'new right' began to consolidate itself in the early 1970s, the press has been a major platform for the propagation of its views.⁸ Considerable cross and vertical fertilisation has been provided by committed right-wing journalists and freelance writers, whose natural haunts are the quality papers – *The Times* and the *Telegraph* – but who are willing to slum it for the sake of reaching the people. Few are as omnipresent as the

self-proclaimed ‘West Indian expert’, Roy Kerridge. But several columnists have over the past few years significantly lengthened their reach as the right has grown in self-assurance, with the Birkbeck College philosophy don Roger Scruton and associate editor of *The Times* Ronald Butt writing mostly for *The Times*, but also, on occasion, for the *Mail*; the right-wing convert Paul Johnson writing mostly for the *Mail*, but also for the *Sun*; the Bristol University Professor of History John Vincent writing mostly for the *Sun*, but also for *The Times*, and so on.

Outside the Fleet Street circuit, many of these journalists hatch their ideas in the same think-tanks that have been responsible for the ideological thrust behind Thatcherism. The social authoritarian citadel of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, has provided intellectual inspiration for Scruton, Johnson, Peregrine Worsthorne, deputy editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, and George Gale of the *Daily Express*, as well as for the Salisbury Group (formed in 1977) and the journal which came out of it, Scruton’s *Salisbury Review*. Scruton was also a founder member of the Conservative Philosophy Group (1975) which has invited Powell, Johnson, Butt, the *Telegraph*’s assistant editor, T.E. Utey, and the prime minister herself to share in its deliberations. Other journalists – like the *Telegraph*’s Alfred Sherman, once director of the Centre for Policy Studies (a leading resource centre of the new right), and freelance educationalist Baroness Caroline Cox – tend on certain issues to inhabit the libertarian end of the new right philosophical spectrum. Still others who align themselves to the right are, like Honor Tracy, natural Powellites, who claim to give voice to the ‘instincts’ of the people.

But whether or not they share a coherent right-wing outlook, these journalists, and the editors and sub-editors who solicit and process their material, have all been instrumental in moulding a version of reality which reflects the shifting Thatcherite amalgam of ‘free enterprise’ individualism, social discipline and coercion. And what – given its abysmal economic record, and its failure to build up new institutional links with its working-class and petit-bourgeois supporters – could be more important to the Tory Party than a collaborative press which has applauded it for breaking the welfare consensus, which has assisted it in facing down Scargill and left-wing local authorities; which has given shape to Tory preoccupation with politicisation in schools, permissiveness in families and criminals in the streets; which has helped create the climate for vigorous new policing methods; and which has inflated the word ‘hooligan’ and ‘subversive’ to include just about anyone who does not see things its way?

The press campaign against anti-racism

Over the years, the papers have created a magnetic field around the terrain of race, being attracted and repelled by the same ideas, stereotypes

and issues. But recently there are signs that such a general concurrence has been supplemented by some element of design, as papers have merged in the common intention to debunk anti-racism. Editors select their targets, send journalists to research their stories, and then withhold publication until the timing is right in campaigning terms. Once one paper publishes a 'race' story, no matter how trivial, others are likely to follow the same trail. And so the same 'news' item (often of no readily apparent 'news value') and accompanying feature can be run in different papers, sometimes under the same byline, sometimes not.

In the case of Paul Johnson's nearly full-page report of plans by various Labour councils to change street names in order to commemorate blacks and 'class warfare', the original *Mail* story appeared virtually intact in the *Sun* the following day under Johnson's name.⁹ But a day after a *Mail* exposé of 'the torrent of lies and twisted truths that is indoctrinating our society today'¹⁰ – a nearly two-page attack on a cartoon book produced by the Institute of Race Relations and a video on policing produced by the Greater London Council – the *Telegraph* came out with its own report on the book and video. On occasion, a feature (or even a letter)¹¹ in one paper has become the subject of a leader in another – an instance being the *Mail*'s prominent centre page 'success story' following the Brixton 'riot' of 1985. The *Mail*'s story focused on a black manager of a clothing shop in Brixton, who demonstrated 'how to succeed in Britain whatever your colour' – with drive, determination and the refusal to be intimidated by young black shoplifters.¹² In a *Sun* leader the following day, the *Mail* article was quoted to show that 'Britain is still a land of opportunity' and black people 'shouldn't blame their problems on their colour but "try, try again" and you will be successful'.

It is no coincidence that, in all these examples, it is the *Mail* which has been first with the story. If different papers give their own imprint to presentations of race, from the 'respectable racism' and lofty argument offered up by *The Times* and *Telegraph* at one end of the social spectrum, to the pandering to prejudice by the *Star* and *Sun* at the other, the *Mail* occupies a central, and uniquely important, position in the market. It is the only daily paper which sells to all social groups, but addresses itself particularly to the key Thatcherite constituency, the lower middle class. Under its editor, Sir David English (knighted by this government), and its committed band of sub-editors, the *Mail* has spearheaded the assault on the 'enemies within', regularly devoting its combined leader and feature page and much of its 'news' to those topics beloved of the new right: the 'loony left', law and order, indoctrination in schools, the menace of anti-racism. Claiming a readership of over five million (it sells nearly two million copies a day), the *Mail* has made intelligible to the many what Scruton and Butt have pitched at the discerning few. Its tone is self-righteous and partisan; it makes no attempt to project an aloof objectivity. Thus, when Scruton wrote on education for the *Mail*, his article was

decorated with scare headlines and sub-headings and an array of hammer-and-sickle emblems – removing him from the ‘above-the-fray’ pose that *The Times* had vested him with.¹³

The *Mail* has pioneered a number of techniques to make its stand on ‘race’ (and more recently, anti-racism) an effective campaigning tool. At its most blatant, it has resorted to pure invention, presented with maximum effect, in order to herald or influence a change in government policy. Such was its ‘One in five babies in Britain are coloured’ front-page revelation, which it later admitted had no basis in fact.¹⁴ Again, in its ‘Scandal of the brides for sale’, the *Mail* offered no evidence even when challenged for its front-page ‘news’ exclusive (plus accompanying feature and leader) about young teenage girls of Asian descent being ‘sold’ by their parents to strangers seeking UK citizenship.¹⁵

The *Mail* has at other times relied on repetition to convince the public of the ‘truth’, running consecutive articles around the same theme, and getting well-known campaigners of the right either to write them or offer their byline. Repeatedly it has given prominence to black people who are willing to deny that racism is an issue in their lives, or to complain of the effects of ‘positive discrimination’. It has, without legal restraint, conducted its own judicial inquiries, and in one notorious instance claimed to ‘solve’ a crime which the black community had (mistakenly, in the *Mail*’s view) laid at the door of white racism.¹⁶ And it has not hesitated to use its influence with the Home Office in order to get across its opinion about the type of black people wanted in Britain – such as the hard-working, middle-class, Roman Catholic Pereiras, who had a flattering love of all things British, and who had become such a part of things in their rural Conservative stronghold that the father of the family had twice played Father Christmas to village children.¹⁷

The *Mail* has, it seems, appropriated and further debased the role of ‘Crusader’ which Lord Beaverbrook had carved out for the *Daily Express* – still its closest mid-market rival, whose editor was also knighted by the Thatcher government. This is not to say that the *Express* has failed to play a part in the current campaign against anti-racism and cultural pluralism: on the contrary, its regular columnist George Gale has, for eight years at least, argued that the ‘society which was Britain never wanted to become multi-racial, and it does not want to now’ and claimed that race relations legislation was designed ‘to frustrate the determination of the British people to retain their own identity’.¹⁸

Gale and his editors have long been open admirers of Powell; their paper, the *Sunday Express*, was the platform for one of his earliest utterances on race (‘Can we afford to let our race problem explode?’)¹⁹ and his recent post-Handsworth ‘I told you so’.²⁰ But, Gale apart, the *Express* is not – like the *Telegraph*, *Times* and *Mail* – a favoured eyrie of well-known new right ‘race’ specialists, and it has tended to be more of a joiner than an innovator – but a joiner which can be even more

vehement in expressing its views on race than the race-mongering *Sun*.

Legitimizing racism

What the *Sun* dispenses at one end of the social scale, its stablemate *The Times* legitimates at the other – or, to put it differently, it is because of the legitimation given to Powellism by the *Telegraph* and *The Times* that the virulent racism of the tabloids is tolerated – and even encouraged. For years, sections of the upmarket press have filed Powell's conceits as 'facts' which could be drawn upon for 'think pieces' about society. During this time, the Butts, Worsthornes, Shermans and nameless leader writers have filtered reality through Powellism, giving it the ruling-class imprimatur. While the yellow press has alerted the people to the incoming 'floods' of immigrants, and the terror of black crime on the streets, the quality press has given such 'scares' the stamp of respectability and the weight of truth, and erected the framework (Britain as a just, tolerant, formerly homogeneous society) within which race was to be discussed. The quality press has accepted that 'natural fears' connected with the black presence are fully justifiable: the incoming numbers *are* too many, and mugging *is* 'an activity of young black men'.²¹

But for journalists of the right, flexing their muscles in the mid-1970s, the media clamour about immigration and crime was not enough. Butt, Andrew Alexander ('The time has come to make a stand in favour of racialism'²²), Worsthorne, Sherman and Utley maintained that there was a 'conspiracy of silence' about race, imposed by the old liberal establishment in collusion with various pressure groups, race relations advisers, like-minded media workers, churchmen and educationalists who were seeking to suppress open discussion about the 'problem' of black people in order to establish their 'moral ascendancy' over the gagged population – an old idea of Powell's. As Thatcher promised to break the welfare consensus, these journalists took it upon themselves to break the so-called 'silence' and the 'moral ascendancy' which kept *all* aspects of race from being discussed. There was to be an open season on black people.

With Thatcher's 'swamping' speech (of January 1978), and her coming to power the following year, the press fanned anticipations that at last something significant would be done to satisfy the people whose 'instincts' had been violated by the black 'influx'. The press egged the government on to make it highly unpleasant, if not impossible, for black dependants to join their relatives in Britain, and at the same time colluded with police in the on-going criminalisation of black youth and with Tory Party indifference to rising racial violence in the inner cities.²³

Thatcher's re-election on a wave of nostalgia for past greatness and xenophobia has imparted a kinetic energy to racist ideology, which has

expanded to colonise ground disputed by one or other of the 'enemies within'. The campaign against anti-racism has had two overlapping phases: in the first, the battleground has been the anti-racist initiatives of Labour-led local councils; the 'enemy' – the white extremists and their black allies or (more generally) pawns; the goal – the exoneration of white culture. In the second, the campaign has broadened out to include two new fields of battle – the schools and inner cities – and the press has become more relentless in pushing forward the attack. The new right's intemperate, at times almost apocalyptic, denunciations of anti-racism have moved from the columns of the quality press into leader and feature pages of the tabloids, with the papers warning their readers that they are facing the threat of cultural annihilation: white extremists and their allies, the 'black racists', have mounted a 'reign of terror' over the white population en route to their goal of total domination.

Discrediting anti-racist initiatives

The catalyst for the offensive against anti-racism was the proclamation by the Labour-led Greater London Council of 1984-5 as Anti-Racist Year, and the decision by other Labour-controlled local authorities to make the fight against racism a political and ideological priority. In its eagerness to discredit simultaneously both the cause of anti-racism and the left, the press has widened the parameters of what constitutes news. During Anti-Racist Year and since then, anything, no matter how trite, ephemeral or false, could become fodder in the press campaign, as Labour councils were portrayed as nests of extremists who were simply using black people for their own political ends – for their votes, their support in anti-abolition and anti-rate-capping campaigns, or simply to get some ideological mileage on Toryism.²⁴

Ridicule was one method which the press employed against cosmetic or purely symbolic gestures proposed by councils, or alleged to be in the making. For instance, over fifty articles sending up the left – some a full-page long – appeared in the national and regional press when there was an alleged leak from Lambeth Council that it was about to ban its road safety symbol, Tufty the Squirrel, on the grounds that it was both 'racist and sexist'. The fact that the story was bogus did not deter the papers, which found Tufty irresistible – what respectable member of the working class would support a party which purged racist squirrels?

Other anti-racist initiatives were discredited as the undemocratic proposals of 'tin-pot dictators' who 'can't see further than their own slogans'.²⁵ When Lambeth Council announced that, as part of Anti-Racist Year, it was considering changing the name of Rhodesia Road to Zimbabwe Road, the *Mail* rounded up the residents of the street and had them photographed, with a black woman prominently in front,

demonstrating their united opposition to the change. This, and subsequent proposed name changes, attracted press attention not only from staff reporters, but also from right-wing heavies like Paul Johnson.²⁶

The facts were often at a premium. In early September 1985, for instance, the *Sun*, *Mirror*, *Star* and *Express* all pounced on the 'news' that Hackney Council was about to change the name of Britannia Walk to Shaheed-E-Azam Bhagot Singh Avenue ('Britannia no longer rules the waves in a left-wing council borough . . . But local Cockneys – who are likely to be OUTNUMBERED by immigrants within 10 years – are furious. "They're making us foreigners in our own country."').²⁷ In fact, Bhagot Singh's was one of forty possible names being considered for a new portion of road: Britannia Walk's future was not in jeopardy. But the press took what it wanted from a council leak, seeing a sinister design (as well as left-wing comedy) in the proposal to name a street after a 'notorious revolutionary who was hanged for murdering British soldiers'.²⁸

During Anti-Racist Year, and since it has drawn to a close, any attempt to look at British history, culture and institutions from the black perspective has brought the press on to the offensive, exonerating British society from imputations of racism, and reaffirming British values and 'way of life'. Consider the press reaction to a campaign against that embodiment of racist culture, the gollywog. Over 200 articles have been written about the Robertson's Jam caricature, and with only a handful of exceptions, these have either indignantly defended this 'nursery room character . . . much loved by generations of true English children'²⁹ or have ridiculed the campaign, with the *Mail* getting black people to put the boot in.³⁰ As far as the press was concerned, the post-Falklands public should be able to cuddle this nostalgic symbol of imperial rule with impunity. And is it fanciful to suppose that at least part of the reason for the press determination to keep this racist emblem where it belonged – on jam jars, in story books (the 'bad' doll among the good), infantilised, in the arms of children – was the fear that black people were getting out of hand with their complaints about racism? The symbol was 'lovable', like Little Black Sambo (also under attack by 'dismal fanatics'³¹) and like the 'affectionate description'³² 'Nig Nog'.

If the press was determined to defeat anti-racist attacks on the ideological manifestations of racism, it was equally concerned to expose the 'favouritism' practised by those councils which encouraged black people to apply for certain jobs or training schemes, and funded various 'ethnic' projects. Inflammatory headlines in the local and popular press informed white people that they were being 'victimised' by 'positive discrimination', and that black people (like women and gays) were fattening off the rates. The *Mail* referred to the council practice of 'anti-whites' racism³³ and was quick to point out that it hadn't

worked in America.³⁴ Something as seemingly insignificant as a council leaflet advertising evening science courses for ‘mature students from black ethnic groups’ was thought deserving of the full *Mail* treatment – a black person was trotted out to denounce it on the grounds that ‘positive discrimination and enforced segregation cause bitterness between people’.³⁵

This ‘enforced segregation’ had another name – apartheid. With easy cynicism, new right ideologues denounced black organisations and the black fight against racism as a move towards apartheid, while considering South Africa – in Roger Scruton’s words – as Britain’s ‘natural friend’: ‘It is probably true that blacks enjoy greater freedom, greater prosperity, greater opportunity and greater peace in South Africa than in most neighbouring countries.’³⁶ Roy Kerridge’s attack on proposals that black children be fostered, if possible, by black families is a good example of the inversion of terms and meanings employed by the right:

Why do black people demand apartheid? The answer is that the new guerilla fighters are ... the black equivalent of those Trotskyites who falsely claim to represent the working man ... Anti-Racist Year, an encouragement to those whose interests lie in a racial power structure, seems to have set the seal of officialdom on a black movement that is essentially no different from the National Front.³⁷

Here, Kerridge has conflated anti-racism with the revolutionary left, and – in the next breath – with the fascist right. Anti-racism has nothing to do with justice – it is all about power. Blacks (‘the new guerilla fighters’) were plotting to use totalitarian methods to dominate and oppress the white population. The implication is that in this ‘New Apartheid’ (as he called it), they would be at the top, and the white ethnic group firmly submerged.

It was in the second phase of the campaign against anti-racism – with the targets subversion in schools and sedition in the streets – that the press has relied less on ridicule to make its point, and more on this type of insolent casuistry. Roger Scruton, perhaps the most artful of the new right pretenders to profundity, has used his *Times*’ columns to try out his historical and philosophical sleights of hand, comparing anti-racism with the Nazi movement in its methods and goal – a final solution.³⁸ The anti-racists were ‘the real racists’ who were terrorising the white population.³⁹ Such gerrymandering with words – blurring their meaning, and drawing up new definitions and political boundaries – was to become the stock-in-trade of the new right. For Paul Johnson, for instance, the ‘race fanatics’ formed a sinister inquisition in ‘unconscious alliance’ with the National Front: ‘each is parasitical on the other ... each needs the other to survive’.⁴⁰ The decent majority were caught between these two extremes, but had more to fear from the new anti-racist ‘real racists’ than from the old-style fascist racists.

Totalitarian in intent, the anti-racists were medieval in method, hunting witches to burn and hauling heretics before their New Inquisition. Running as a bass line beneath this increasingly shrill press motif is an undeniable contempt for the people. Passive and unthinking, possessing only brute 'instincts', the people can be mesmerised by the anti-racist indoctrinators. But if the bogey of anti-racism is made menacing enough, they will, so the ideologues seem to believe, take fright, and allow themselves to be led back to the fastness of their national and cultural identity, the Tory Party.

Taking the offensive against cultural pluralism

The danger was that the anti-racists (like the peace campaigners and women's movement) would get them young, in the schools. In the wake of the 1981 urban uprisings, Ronald Butt had drawn attention to the way dangerous pressure groups were at work in the classroom, peddling 'black hatred of white society' in the guise of anti-racism: it was this, and not racism and unemployment, which lay behind the burning of Brixton.⁴¹

Since the first Brixton uprising and the second in 1985, the subject of indoctrination in schools has been endowed with an almost McCarthyite fervour. Scruton (who has recently devoted no fewer than eight of his *Times*' columns to politicisation in education⁴²), former Tory whip Baroness Cox (adviser on education to Margaret Thatcher and the *Mail*), Worsthorpe, Butt and Alexander, among others, have advanced 'indoctrination' as a general explanation for deteriorating morale and standards in schools, leaving Tory policy blameless. By making the schools their chosen field of battle, right-wing journalists have been able to take on a number of the 'enemies within' at once – permissive parents, feckless teachers reared on 1960s' pap, outright subversives – 'an estimated minimum of 25,000 of our teachers are Marxists', according to one *Mail* writer⁴³ – and the pressure groups – black, gay, anti-sexist, peace, ecology – all with a 'hidden curriculum' to get their political message across.

The Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority had meanwhile imposed 'anti-racist' guidelines on its schools, which – in the view of the right – forced children to see racism where none existed, and taught them to despise their own history and heritage. And in London and elsewhere, schools had adopted 'multicultural programmes' (or the trimmings of such programmes) which the right feared would lead to the indigenous 'culture' being reduced to one of many, all getting equal treatment in the classroom.

It wasn't just the practice of multiculturalism, with its assumption of cultural pluralism, but the *idea* of it which was anathema to the right. The press made certain that the much-reviled Swann Committee on the

education of minority groups would in no way threaten the status quo; 'leaks' of its proposals concerning 'mother tongue' teaching in schools were savaged even before its report was released. Alfred Sherman feared the report would recommend 'a procrustean pidgin culture to be imposed on majority and minorities alike', and deemed this a recipe for 'cultural genocide', which 'in effect outlawed the concept of the English nation'.⁴⁴ Mary Kenny thought the proposals would turn 'mild British people into resentful misanthropes ... as they see everything native to their own tradition scuttled'.⁴⁵ Leader writers concurred, even when it became apparent that the Swann Committee had no intention of revolutionising education, but instead proposed nothing more far-reaching than making morning assembly in schools more relevant to children from different backgrounds, and giving 'minority languages' equal status with European. According to the *Express*, this meant that 'British culture and value should no longer come first in the classroom',⁴⁶ while the *Telegraph* the previous day feared it would 'lead only to great racial bitterness among the white population'.

The *Telegraph* had to look no further than its own Honor Tracy to find that bitterness personified. Back in 1976 Tracy had announced that she was ready to go to jail in order to defy the Race Relations Board and defend the right of English people to live in their own country as they chose.⁴⁷ Her response to Swann was to call for a white uprising against non-white domination – 'our own new role will have to be that of native freedom fighters. We are not merely the people of the land, but trustees for those who come after us'.⁴⁸

It may seem tempting to consider Tracy as marginal, and of little importance – she did, after all, once use her *Telegraph* column to defend a fringe far-right organisation.⁴⁹ But this would be ignoring the increasing convergence in outlook between sections of the mainstream press and the far right during the six years of Thatcherism. As far as the attack on anti-racism is concerned, there is not much to choose between the right-wing press and the far right's *Choice* (motto: 'racialism is patriotism'), the publication sponsored by Lady Birdwood (who marched with both the National Front and the British Movement in the 1970s, and spoke on a British National Party platform in 1983). In the spring 1985 edition of *Choice*, for instance, which is subtitled 'For race and nation', there is an editorial proclaiming the anti-racists to be anti-British, as well as extracts from Scruton's *Times*' column and various other national papers.

But a heroic native freedom-fighter was at hand – an exemplar for both the mainstream press and the fringes beyond – Ray Honeyford, the Bradford headmaster. Well over a thousand articles have appeared in the regional and national press about the man who defied the race inquisition, and dared to speak his mind, since Honeyford first publicly displayed his prejudices in the *Times Educational Supplement* and the

Salisbury Review.⁵⁰ Since then, parents at the Drummond Middle School have campaigned to have him sacked, while the press, by and large, has absolved him of racist sin, and pronounced him instead a martyr.

For Honeyford, it is whites who are at a disadvantage in schools like his which have a majority of black children, white children who are the victims of 'racism'.⁵¹ They are forced to learn alongside children for whom English is a second language ('true of all Asian children') and others 'from homes where educational ambition and the values to support it are conspicuously absent (i.e., the vast majority of West Indian homes ...)'.⁵² They were being taught 'to denigrate the British Empire'⁵³ and forced to read 'Inglan is a Bitch' alongside Wordsworth and Shakespeare.⁵⁴ Their classes were constantly being interrupted when Asian parents took their children to India – 'wildly and implacably' resenting 'simple British requirements' of keeping attendance during the term.⁵⁵ White victims endured all of this in silence – until, that is, Ray Honeyford, the man on the spot, the former Labour supporter who at last saw the light, dared to say enough is enough.

If the first phase of the campaign against anti-racism was an attempt to exonerate British culture from the charges of racism, the second phase, fuelled by the Swann and Honeyford controversies, has sought to ensure British culture its 'rightful' primacy of place in schools and society generally: this should *not* become a multicultural country. Over the past year there has been a steady flow of editorials and articles relating to the Honeyford case. The victimisation of Honeyford for his truth-telling, the plight of white children (and white values) in cities like Bradford, the threat to Britain's cherished institutions, like freedom of speech and democracy, now under attack from the 'hysterical political temperament of the Indian sub-continent'⁵⁶ and home-grown extremism are some of the themes which the press has taken up, while denying finding 'the remotest indications of racism' in Honeyford's articles. Honeyford was, in this same *Telegraph* editorial, being persecuted for 'the unpardonable sin of referring in public to racial problems where whites are the victims'.⁵⁷ The *Mail* has taken a leaf from Scruton's book, and characterised the campaign against Honeyford as the work of extremists who 'prate of the evils of racism' and themselves 'personify Fascism'.⁵⁸ So successful has the media been in turning an obscure headmaster into a national hero and sage that the Prime Minister recently beckoned Honeyford to London, to give her the benefit of his advice on education.

For Tories swept into office by re-kindled faith in 'the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world',⁵⁹ Honeyford's stand, and the ideological mileage which the press has got out of the campaign to oust him, could not be more timely. For since the election of 1983 the spirit of patriotism has seemed increasingly empty and directionless,

and racism has moved in to fill the Falklands void. And so, editorials, features and letters to the press have warned the 'indigenous' inhabitants of the threat to their history and traditions posed by anti-racism and other cultures – it might not be too late for that 'Tory-led programme of positive assimilation based on a fervent faith in British superiority' which Peregrine Worsthorne had urged in the *Sunday Telegraph* in April 1981. Cultures were *not* all equal, and British people should not be cheated of their birthright. Why should they be expected to tolerate the fact that 'ethnic groups' are 'encouraged to maintain the self-same culture, religion and lifestyles, etc, which failed to produce mass material prosperity back home while at the same time enjoying all the material benefits available here ...'⁶⁰ By 1985 the right-wing press was putting Britain's black population, still called 'immigrants', on notice: assimilate, before the patience of the white majority runs out.

'Black racists' in the streets

It was within this context of a resurgent white culturalism that the press descended on Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham, and emerged to give that notice the force of an ultimatum:

Either they obey the laws of this land where they have taken up residence and accepted both the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship, or they must expect the fascist street agitators to call ever more boldly and with ever louder approval for them to 'go back from whence they came'.⁶¹

The press has (like the government) been reluctant to endorse Powell's 'solution' of repatriation – though happy to give it a blaze of publicity. By 1985 repatriation was both too late (too many blacks knew no other country) and impractical – impossible for a 'law and order' government to set in motion without incurring an unacceptable level of disorder. But if repatriation was not publicly embraced, neither was it altogether shunned. Powell won praise in the *Express* for saying that the Handsworth 'riot' showed repatriation was the only solution – he was, as ever, 'doing the nation a service' by refusing to allow 'the race problem' to be swept under the carpet.⁶² Shortly afterwards, the press made much of the statement by Tory MP Nicholas Fairbairn that 'West Indians' were 'lazy' and that they should either get to work or get out. (Within two weeks of the furor aroused by his remark, Fairbairn was writing a column in *The Times*: in defence of South Africa, the only country in Africa 'where prosperity reigns'.⁶³)

When they were not paying heed to Powell or the likes of Fairbairn, the tabloids indulged in the most florid sort of Powellism – unsubstantiated anecdotes about what white people have endured from their black neighbours, all passed off as 'fact'. Listen, for instance, to how

Lynda Lee-Potter of the *Mail* described the white victims of 'racism' in terms appropriated from the black experience:

Elderly white people on the estates are abused, spat on, terrorised, called pigs and scum and every single authority has let them down. Politicians don't make stirring speeches about them, police do little to protect them. Journalists don't write about them ...⁶⁴

A week later she wrote another feature under the headline 'Thank God you have written what we think' – again reproducing scare stories, including one from a policeman complaining about 'racial crime and law breaking'. Her message was that white people must speak up now – and overcome the 'powerfully effective censorial campaign that's brain-washed us all'.⁶⁵

What is most disturbing about the bulk of the press coverage of the 1985 'riots' and their aftermath – perhaps even more unsettling than the chronic misreporting, vicious stereotyping and refusal to give serious consideration to their causes – is the malign animosity it reveals. Since September 1985 the yellow press has been indulging in its own form of racial violence, which complements (and encourages) the growing racial violence on the streets – about which it has, with one temporary lapse, maintained a fairly steady indifference.⁶⁶ From one end of the press spectrum to the other, racism has been re-defined as something black aggressors practise against their white victims, with even the *Sun*, which rarely runs a leader which is more than a few column inches long, devoting its entire leader page to 'the high price of telling the truth ... We have tyranny and racism now ... black racism'.⁶⁷

There are racists on the streets – black racists:

Either they forgo (sic) the anarchic luxury of these orgies of arson, looting and murderous assaults against the men and women whose task it is to uphold the laws of this land or they will provoke a paramilitary reaction unknown to mainland Britain.⁶⁸

Such is the *Mail's* solution to black racism – a French-style riot control force to protect property and responsible citizens from the chronically lawless, outside the pale of assimilation.⁶⁹ Whether or not the *Mail's* recommendations are taken up, there is no doubting their appeal for a government which senses in the inner-city revolts the makings of a new Falklands factor – wherever the next trouble spot, the police Task Force will be sent to show the necessary resolution and keep the flag flying, while Labour opponents, portrayed as soft on law and order, are written off as not fit to govern. The national sense of purpose – that 'new confidence born of economic battles at home and tested and found true 8,000 miles away'⁷⁰ – will be kept alive at the expense of Britain's black population, scapegoats for the monetarist blight. And meanwhile, the Thatcherite cadres of the press will keep up the pressure – assimilate, or else.

But what does assimilation mean in Thatcher's Britain? What can it mean for black people, Asian and Afro-Caribbean, who have been confined by racism and monetarism to the inner-city armies of the forever jobless, and whose culture of resistance to racism has itself been deemed racist? Can it mean much more for the relative few who have escaped from the ghettos, and can assimilate in their class (the press loves 'success stories' of upward mobility) but not in their culture? Or the still fewer who have assimilated in their class and culture – like the *Mail's* model family, the Pereiras – only to find themselves still the target of racist attacks in the streets, housing estates and the suburbs, violence which is becoming an habitual, everyday expression of the British way of life?

With anti-racism execrated by the press, assimilation means acquiescence in the racist status quo; it means the acceptance of an ideology which stresses British tolerance and decency, however much at odds these are with the reality of daily experience. It means the embrace of a backward-looking patriotism and nostalgia for Empire, and respect for the 'homogeneity' which, in new right doctrine, gives the nation its coherence and meaning, and which makes black people – however hard they try to 'assimilate' – outsiders.

References

- 1 In the following *Guardian* piece (24 January 1984) on Anti-Racist Year Jill Tweedie spoke the language of what Martin Barker has called 'The New Racism':

... the truth is that some parts of racism are extremely natural ... Indeed, so much is a kind of racism built into humanity that it could well be considered a primeval, possibly genetic, inheritance from our most distant ancestors, of whatever race or colour ... Somehow we must try to distinguish between the age-old instinctual fear of and recoil from the 'stranger' that everyone feels to some extent ... and its translation into the cruelty, contempt and injustice that truly deserves the name 'racism' ... I know that we are no more, though no less, racist than any other nation.

See Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the ideology of the tribe* (London, 1981).
- 2 The only daily papers which have not participated in the campaign against anti-racism are the *Guardian*, the *Financial Times* and, to a certain extent, the *Daily Mirror*. Alone of all the press, the Communist Party's *Morning Star* has taken a consistently anti-racist line, but its circulation is tiny.
- 3 Speech delivered 20 April 1968, which continued: 'As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood".'
- 4 See Anthony Barnett, 'Iron Britannia', *New Left Review* (No. 134, 1982).
- 5 Speech by Nigel Lawson, 22 June 1982.
- 6 Speech by Margaret Thatcher at Cheltenham, 3 July 1982.
- 7 Margaret Thatcher reportedly used the term in relation to the striking miners when she told the Tory backbench 1922 Committee that we had fought the enemy without in the Falklands and now we had to fight the enemy within (*Guardian*, 20 July 1984).
- 8 These views range from libertarian beliefs in a laissez-faire economy and individual

freedoms to the social authoritarian emphasis on the maintenance of order and the strong state. For the leading figures and pressure groups of the new right, see David Edgar, Kenneth Leech and Paul Weller, *The New Right and the Church* (London, 1985).

- 9 *Daily Mail* (1 July 1985); *Sun* (2 July 1985).
- 10 *Daily Mail* (8 October 1985).
- 11 On 11 October 1985 a letter from J.B. Fuller, Principal of Waltham Forest College, London, was published in *The Times*. Without offering any evidence, Fuller maintained that 'young West Indians' were responsible for the majority of thefts in his college, and that 'many ordinary Britons are now becoming aware of being ethnic minorities in parts of their own land'. Fuller's letter was immediately taken up by the national and local press, and used as the pretext for slurs on the Afro-Caribbean community.
- 12 *Daily Mail* (4 October 1985).
- 13 *The Times* (3 February 1984).
- 14 *Daily Mail* (4 February 1978).
- 15 *Daily Mail* (5 August 1985).
- 16 On 19 January 1981 a fire broke out during a party in New Cross, London, which eventually resulted in the death of thirteen black teenagers. Almost immediately the *Daily Mail* ruled out a racist attack ('there's not a shred of evidence'), saying left-wing militants were out to exploit a racial motive (30 January 1981). Three years later it found the 'mystery man' who it claimed started the fire: a black partygoer (7 and 8 May 1984). The case has since then been closed without anyone being charged.
- 17 The *Mail* first took up the Pereira case in September 1983. Its support for the Pereiras intensified in May 1984 when these 'overstayers' were given permission to reside permanently in Britain. During this same month a 20-year-old sari-clad widow, Afia Begum, was, with her small daughter, ambushed and deported from the country, without the *Mail* showing any concern. Her case for permanent residence was a strong one, but she did not have an English village behind her.
- 18 *Daily Express* (13 June 1978).
- 19 *Sunday Express* (9 July 1967).
- 20 *Sunday Express* (15 September 1985). In the same issue, the paper's editor, John Junor, chimed in with some positive words about Powell: 'But isn't everything he said then coming to pass now?'
- 21 *The Times* (10 August 1982).
- 22 *Daily Mail* (9 November 1981).
- 23 For the infiltration of the Tory Party by the National Front, see 'Draft report of the National Advisory Committee of the Young Conservatives', 1983.
- 24 The Thatcher government has passed legislation abolishing the Greater London Council and six other Labour-led metropolitan councils (effective from 1 April 1986) and has set limits ('rate-capping') on how much other councils can spend.
- 25 *Daily Mail* (12 November 1984).
- 26 Johnson writing in the *Daily Mail* (1 July 1985), and *Sun* (2 July 1985).
- 27 *Sun* (7 September 1985).
- 28 *Daily Mail* (7 September 1985). For Peregrine Worsthorpe of the *Sunday Telegraph*: 'The presence in Britain's capital and other major cities of such a large proportion of citizens whose allegiances may lie with the enemies of the West could be a real and growing danger ... our new ethnic minorities do not sound as if they were at all proud or grateful to have become British. Indeed, their community leaders give the impression that they hate Britain for her past imperial sins' (29 September 1985).
- 29 *Daily Mail* (12 June 1984).
- 30 *Daily Mail* (5 and 22 May 1984).
- 31 *Daily Telegraph* (26 September 1985).
- 32 *Sunday Telegraph* (27 May 1984). According to *The Times* (22 June 1984) 'Nig Nog' was a term we all say. Several papers were critical of the sacking of the Police

- Federation's expert on race relations for referring to black people as 'Nig Nogs' in his address to the Federation's annual conference in 1984.
- 33 *Daily Mail* (17 May 1985).
- 34 *Daily Mail* (22 August 1985).
- 35 *Daily Mail* (17 May 1985).
- 36 *The Times* (2 April 1985).
- 37 *Daily Mail* (15 October 1984).
- 38 'The paths blocked by anti-racists', *The Times* (16 April 1985).
- 39 R. Scruton, 'Who are the real racists?', *The Times* (30 October 1984).
- 40 'The Race Inquisition: how long before it could be unleashed on your life?', *Daily Mail* (17 June 1985).
- 41 *The Times* (10 July 1981).
- 42 See also Roger Scruton, Angela Ellis-Jones and Dennis O'Keefe, *Education and Indoctrination: an attempt at definition and a review of social and political implications* (London, 1985).
- 43 Rodney Tyler, 'This battle for your child's mind', *Daily Mail* (11 October 1983).
- 44 *Daily Telegraph* (19 January 1985).
- 45 'Race Madness', *Daily Mail* (13 September 1984).
- 46 *Daily Express* (15 March 1985).
- 47 *Daily Telegraph* (29 May and 26 June 1976). Tracy was defending Robert Relf, who had violated the Race Relations Act by putting up a sign outside his house saying it would be sold 'to an English family'.
- 48 *Daily Telegraph* (22 September 1984).
- 49 *Daily Telegraph* (19 November 1983), about the virtues of WISE (Welsh, Irish, Scots, English), an organisation which has brought together members of the Tory Party right and neo-fascist groups.
- 50 Ray Honeyford, *Times Educational Supplement* (2 September 1983). 'Multi-ethnic intolerance', *Salisbury Review* (summer 1983) and 'Education and race — an alternative view', *Salisbury Review* (winter 1984).
- 51 Honeyford has written that 'their educational "disadvantage" is now confirmed' — by common sense. Hard evidence to the contrary has been provided by the Keighley primary study, conducted by Geoffrey Pollard (see *Times Educational Supplement* 11 October 1985).
- 52 Honeyford, 'Education and race — an alternative view', op. cit.
- 53 Honeyford, 'Multi-ethnic intolerance', op. cit.
- 54 Honeyford, 'Education and race — an alternative view', op. cit.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 *Daily Telegraph* (20 September 1985).
- 58 The *Daily Mail* leader (3 April 1985). Scruton and his colleagues at *The Times* have rallied around Honeyford. Andrew Brown defended Honeyford in *The Times* (3 September 1985) and the *Spectator* (22 June 1985) and is the author of a Centre for Policy Studies Pamphlet, *Trials of Honeyford: problems in multicultural education* (November 1985), one theme of which, according to pre-publication publicity, is that 'the slogan "no culture is superior to any other" would, if taken seriously, make all education unthinkable.' The *Salisbury Review* has risen to the defence of its contributor on several occasions: see Jonathan Savery, 'Anti-Racism as Witchcraft' (July 1985), and David Dale, 'The New Ideology of Race' (October 1985).
- 59 Margaret Thatcher at Cheltenham, 3 July 1982.
- 60 P. Worsthorne, 'End this Silence over Race', *Sunday Telegraph* (29 September 1985).
- 61 *Daily Mail* leader (8 October 1985). Some members of the new right support repatriation, voluntary if possible, forced if necessary. See John Casey, 'One nation: the politics of race' in the *Salisbury Review* (autumn 1982), and Scruton's editorial in support of Casey, in *Salisbury Review* (summer 1983). Scruton wrote: 'While we may disagree with the policy of compulsory repatriation . . . there is no doubt that

merely to arrest the flow of immigrants cannot solve the social problem. Constructive efforts are required, both to encourage those who wish to return, and to ensure the integration of those who do not.'

- 62 *Daily Express* (21 September 1985).
63 *The Times* (15 October 1985).
64 *Daily Mail* (9 October 1985).
65 *Daily Mail* (16 October 1985). Her article was accompanied by a leader on Britain in 'a grip of inquisition'.
66 Racist attacks had been largely ignored by the press during the past two years until the Kassam family was murdered by arson in London on 13 July 1985. That, and the rash of arson attacks which rapidly followed, received considerable press comment, with the *Daily Mail* leader (13 August 1985) fearing the attacks on Asians may lead 'their own angry young men' to take the law into their own hands, and the *Evening Standard* (12 August 1985) fearing much the same thing. Since the 'riots' of September and October, the press emphasis has been on the 'racist attacks' perpetrated by Afro-Caribbean against Asian, or by black against white. See 'UK commentary' in this issue of *Race & Class*.
67 *Sun* (24 October 1985).
68 *Daily Mail* leader (8 October 1985).
69 'Is this the riot cure?', *Daily Mail* (21 October 1985).
70 Margaret Thatcher, 3 July 1982.

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On revolutionary nationalism: the legacy of Cabral*

The legacy of Amílcar Cabral (1924-73) lives in several historical achievements, each of which has marked the trend and temper of our times. Most obviously and directly, those achievements are to be found in the consequences of anti-colonial liberation in Portuguese Guiné and Cape Verde that flowed, and in more or less large measure continue to flow, from a practice and theory associated inseparably with Cabral's action and thought. Other achievements, less direct but no less real, may be seen in Cabral's contribution to the development of national-liberation strategy in a wider and possibly an all-African context. And others again, politically less operative but still with a living significance, have taken shape in Cabral's influence on the thinking of non-Africans concerned with general or specific issues of socio-cultural change – revolutionary change – in the world we have now.

What kind of person could do all that? Cabral was a man of great complexity and breadth of temperament, but whose cast of mind and character could and often did project an almost bare simplicity of purpose. This could be superficially misleading: Cabral's road to simplicity

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Basil Davidson is an anti-imperialist scholar and writer who has campaigned for African liberation for many years. Among his recent books are *No Fist is Big Enough to Hide the Sky: the liberation of Guiné and Cape Verde* (London, Zed, 1981) and *Africa in Modern History* (London, Allen Lane, 1978).

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of purpose had passed in fact through an arduous struggle of mind and emotion; and the strength of character and conviction that he had won from this lay also in his capacity to understand the inner struggles of others, however different in mettle they might be from himself. But the impression of simplicity of purpose was never misleading in its essence. Here was an intellectual – one, indeed, of rare and shining talent – who believed that the reaching of conclusions without the taking of appropriate action was self-frustration or mere betrayal. At the same time, Cabral believed that while theorising without action must be vain or irresponsible, action unshaped by theory was bound to fail: or, more exactly, that action leading to no embodiment in effective theory – in *appropriate* theory – was only the road to delusion and therefore to defeat.

Such beliefs, together with their extraordinarily resolute practice in his own life, gave him a power of leadership that was most unusual in the societies of late-colonial Africa, and probably in any of the societies of our time. What made him still more unusual was that the action he proposed and took, and the theory that he drew from it, and which afterwards constantly nourished it, were able to succeed in the most hostile and forbidding of circumstances: the circumstances, precisely, that he had chosen to face. Clio is a stern goddess. She soon forgets those who lose their way, however well-intentioned, and prefers to leave them to wander and be forgotten. She will not forget Cabral.

This essay is little concerned with the record of events. They are well known, or may be learned from a documentation by many hands and from many points of view. In that respect, besides, there was the additional achievement of Cabral – yet was it not inseparable from all he did and thought, rather than additional? – of being able to explain himself. Combining rigour with notable expository skills, Cabral explained himself at every important step and to every audience he considered useful or deserving explanation: first and foremost, in Guiné Creole to those who gave him leadership, young or old, peasant or petty bourgeois; then in Portuguese to any who spoke that language; and afterwards in French, or latterly in English, to audiences in Europe or America and to visitors from overseas. He wrote all the time, from the poetry of his youth to the lectures and addresses which brought him countless readers up and down the world, as well as the regular ‘reports on the progress of the struggle’ in which he marked the onward movement of events, and a great deal more besides. His published writings¹ give the substance of his action and thought. They are relatively copious but still form only a small part of all that he discussed, and that remains available on paper. They are all marked by two characteristics. One of these is their consistency: what he wrote for ‘external’ use and consumption was exactly what he wrote, however differently in style and form, for the militants who followed him. The other is their severe and

practical rigour: nothing will be found of empty rhetoric, of 'revolutionary' verbalism, of bombast or pretence.

The issues considered here can therefore take the record for granted; but the merest outline may be useful. Clandestinely in 1956, Cabral formed the African Independence Party of Guiné and Cape Verde (PAIGC) with five other men. There followed six years of political trial and error, experience and effort, and then, onward from January 1963, eleven years of anti-colonial warfare linked to further political development, always against extremely heavy odds until very near the end. In 1974 the PAIGC won a complete and unconditional freedom for Guiné, wresting independence from a colonial power defeated both militarily and politically, and then, twelve months later, for Cape Verde as well. This remarkable success was crowned, moreover, by another in some ways still more remarkable. The ideas, methods and morals of the PAIGC had their instrumental effect on the colonial enemy, and, in significant degree, lay 'at the base of the Armed Forces Movement' which overthrew the dictatorship in Portugal and enabled the colonial wars to be brought to an end.² Whenever before had revolutionary change in Africa helped to promote revolutionary change in Europe? Hadn't 'all the books' declared that such a thing was impossible, even unthinkable? Yet it happened; and this was another part of the legacy of Cabral.

Cabral was murdered by agents of the Portuguese dictatorship in January 1973, one of the last and most baleful acts of horror of that already agonising regime. He was only 49, and at the height of his energy and intellectual power. One can only speculate, fruitlessly, on what he would have done with the rest of his life. It is further clear that the full dimensions of his legacy have still to be revealed. Yet it may still be of some use to attempt an estimate, even tentatively, of the value of his leading ideas, proposals, and conceptions in the context of his period – that is, the late-colonial and neocolonial period (or, if you prefer, the period of transnational capitalism), which is by no means at an end. This article is offered as a contribution to that kind of estimate.

* * *

Judged by a growing volume of comment, several of Cabral's concepts have captured the attention of a wide audience. One of these is his concept of a colonial petty-bourgeois leadership which must 'commit suicide' in its class-consciousness (and class interests) if it is to be able to lead beyond a merely reformist (that is, neocolonialist or collaborationist) nationalism. Another is his concept of national liberation as involving, necessarily, precisely this leadership-beyond-reformism which 'born again' petty-bourgeois revolutionaries must make their own: or, as he put it succinctly, any real liberation has to be a process of

revolution. Some consideration of these concepts in their practical integument will then, perhaps, reveal a further and still deeper dimension of his legacy to Africans and, as may seem likely, to other peoples as well.

Historians can sometimes feel that the old reductionism of the social anthropologists, denying the relevance of process, has repeated itself among the political sociologists of more recent years. The anthropologists, as it happens, said their *nostra culpa* for turning their backs on history a long time ago, in fact as long ago as Evans-Pritchard's famous lecture of 1950;³ but it scarcely appears that their sociological successors, whether or not they claim the laurels of political science, have pondered on the implications of that notable turn-about. The vocabulary may have changed, as well as the symbols (or is it just the jargon?) of debate: one or other functionalism is out, one or other structuralism is in. But *process*, as a dynamic factor in *situation*, still seems often lost to sight.

The modern version of a naturalistic study of society, wrote Evans-Pritchard in his Marett Lecture:

claims that for an understanding of the functioning of a society there is no need for the student of it to know anything about its history, any more than there is need for a physiologist to know the history of an organism to understand it. Both are natural systems and can be described in terms of natural law without recourse to history . . .⁴

But is the claim greatly different among many analysts today, including some of those who seek to use a marxist toolkit? The latter, of course, make no reference to 'natural law' in the sense of Evans-Pritchard more than thirty years ago; but in place of this 'natural law' there seems often to be smuggled in another kind of 'law' that is no less mandatory (or mysterious) in its workings. This new 'natural law' refers, usually, to class attitudes, class crystallisations or tendencies to such, and class potentials according to received schemes; and it does all this, one can't but observe, without caring to plunge its pristine beauty into the bath tub of real life: that is, into the realities of process as recorded and revealed by the history of ideas, developments, and events. So the 'theory of petty-bourgeois suicide' attributed to Cabral is taken up and used as a 'given symbol' in a generalised debate, rather than as what it actually was or is – a strictly limited option in a strictly defined situation. Old Marx, one may fear, will be turning in his grave once more.

A sociologist with experience of Tanzania lately wrote a perceptive book called *Beyond Ujamaa*, and was rightly thanked for a freshness of approach to that concept and debate. Was the legacy of Cabral of any value here? Evidently not. Goran Hyden found that: "The notion that the African petty-bourgeoisie should be capable of committing "class suicide", as Amilcar Cabral once put it, is hardly compatible with the

development realities of contemporary Africa.⁵ And this was all that Hyden found useful to say upon the subject. If he was right about this, then clearly Cabral and his ideas would be little worth discussing further. Anyone with relevant experience who could suggest that ‘the African petty-bourgeoisie’ *en masse* was ever going to commit class suicide, when presented with or grasping the reins of state power, must indeed be a fruitless optimist, if not entirely soft in the head. Cabral was not that kind of person, however, and proposed no such fatuous *dénouement*. It can only be, I suppose, that this writer on Tanzania had simply not bothered to find out what Cabral did propose, but preferred to treat a subtle and precise discourse as though it were another ‘given symbol’, a sort of convenient Aunt Sally to be overturned by some handy missile of superior analysis.

The fact is that Cabral, whatever his faults of analysis (and of course he committed some of those), never made the mistake of arguing from ignorance: of attempting, that is, to make good his case outside the limits of its own historical process. If he gave way now and then (but remarkably seldom) to the temptations of intellectual generalism, he was even so always careful to argue by extension: saying, effectively, that ‘if your situation is comparable with ours, within *this* situation in Guiné or Cape Verde, then you may expect this or that to follow’. So let us recall what he really said about the petty bourgeoisie and its so improbable suicide as a class. The essential references were not singular, as Hyden thinks, but occurred on at least two public occasions: once during his lecture on social structure – only of Guiné, please note – given at Milan in 1964, and a second time during his address at Havana in 1966, well-known by its title, ‘The Weapon of Theory’.

His central point here was that Guiné possessed no ‘national bourgeoisie’, nor a working class in any way conscious of its nature and potentials. As a possible instrument for initiating change there was only the beginnings of a petty bourgeoisie – or, in class terms, of its embryo – which had learned how to manipulate the state through its urban, literate and semi-privileged position in colonial society:

This is the only stratum capable of controlling or even utilising the instruments which the colonial state employed against our people. So we come to the conclusion that in colonial conditions it is the petty bourgeoisie which is the inheritor of state power (though I wish we could be wrong in this conclusion). The moment national liberation comes, and the petty bourgeoisie takes power, we enter or rather return to history, and thus the internal contradictions break out again.

No question, as you see, of supposing that the petty bourgeoisie, *telle quelle*, will ever commit suicide in order to lead a revolution. On the contrary, at this stage of his thinking (1963-4), and faced with the

manifest realities of what was then happening in Africa (especially in West Africa), he was even inclined to argue that the whole process of colonial 'liberation', within the situations then to hand, might be reasonably seen as 'an initiative of the enemy':

The objective of the imperialist countries was to prevent the enlargement of the socialist camp, to liberate the reactionary forces in our countries which were then being stifled by colonialism, and to enable these forces to ally themselves with the international bourgeoisie. The fundamental objective was to create a bourgeoisie where one did not exist, in order specifically to strengthen the imperialist and the capitalist camp . . .

What, then, should be done? Go with the current, and let it carry history wherever it would? Bow to the overwhelming might of the Portuguese dictatorship, and wait for better times? Many thought so. But Cabral's choice, and the choice of the few who followed him, was to form a 'party of struggle', and to use that party as a weapon of real change. They looked for the working class that alone was capable (as many outside Guiné told them) of leading that kind of struggle, and they did not find it. They searched for revolutionary intellectuals ready for 'class suicide', and scarcely found them either: in all the history of Guiné, fewer than a dozen Africans (or *mestiços: assimilados*) had achieved a university degree, and most of those were dead or in close service of the colonial dictatorship. There remained some available individuals of the petty bourgeoisie: not many, as it proved, a very little group. 'And so this little group began.'

This is where we have the nub of the process. For what was done by this handful, tentatively at first and then resolutely after August 1959, was to turn its back on the bulk of the petty bourgeoisie, and to set themselves to act as the revolutionary segment of a working class which did not, in fact, exist. They defined themselves as such, and acted as such, rallying wage-workers in Bissau as best as they were able until, with more effort – having prepared about 1,000 militants (or *cadres* in their usage) by the end of 1962 – they could begin to win support, and then participation, among the village masses. Not for a petty-bourgeois reformism, but for a movement capable of developing into a revolution.

How original was this? Well, it occurred elsewhere in Africa, notably in Mozambique and in Angola. But I think its originality, in each of these cases, was perfectly genuine: it came, that is, out of the given situation for men and women whose political formation had no international background, or, at best, rather little of one. It was taught by the brute facts; but the gift, of course, was to be able to learn. It had happened before, after all; and to other peoples striving for the road ahead in times of darkness. In colonial Vietnam, for example, we find the journal of Thanh Nien (forerunner of the Viet Minh) discussing the

role of revolutionary petty bourgeois as early as 1929:

The history of the world revolution teaches us that the intellectuals are the very first elements which sacrifice themselves for the revolutionary cause ... [But] unfortunately these intellectuals are also in general opportunists ...

To put an end to the lack of discipline ... the party must adopt a purely revolutionary method of education. In effect, it is indispensable that all the comrades 'proletarianise' themselves, 'revolutionise' themselves, in order to have the same thoughts, behaviour, language, etc ... [They must] abandon their rich clothes and don the rags of the proletarians, become workers, peasants, men of the people, etc.⁶

The petty-bourgeois clerks, mechanics, chauffeurs, hospital servants and the rest scarcely had any rich clothes to abandon in the Guiné of 1956. A regular wage, a seat at a café table, and a choice of shirts and shoes was about what they aspired to. Yet the parallel is otherwise exact. The project of Thanh Nien was precisely the project of Cabral thirty years later, and far away; but the one proved as compatible with the 'development realities' of Vietnam as the other with those of Guinea-Bissau.

In the case of Guinea-Bissau this project was fairly well established by the time of Cabral's Milan lecture of 1964, a fact which emphasises that the early years, 1956-64, were the really crucial ones. By the end of 1963 the fighting movement had won firm hold on small but decisive areas of liberated territory, while the political movement (in so far as the political can be said to have been separated from the military, which was not very far) had survived some almost mortal tests and trials. In February 1964 the party's first congress was able to secure strong internal discipline, lay out the programme that would liberate the country ten years later, launch the beginnings of mobile warfare with a regular guerilla fighting force, and reaffirm the revolutionary perspectives of its leadership. Speaking at Milan, Cabral could now affirm with confidence that:

the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie is honest: that is to say it remains identified, in spite of all the hostile conditions, with the fundamental interests of the mass of our people. To achieve this it may have to commit suicide: but it will not lose. By sacrificing itself it can incarnate itself, but in the condition of workers and peasants ...⁷

Two years later, in Havana, he returned to the same theme, and further clarified his meaning. And here, one may recall, he was speaking in a Cuba which could well take his point: for what would have happened there if a revolutionary segment of the petty bourgeoisie had failed to appear and act?

A reformist petty bourgeoisie, he repeated, must lead simply to a neocolonial outcome. The result was all the more assured because:

events have shown that the only social stratum capable both of becoming conscious in the first place of the reality of imperialist domination, and of handling the state apparatus inherited from that domination, is the native petty bourgeoisie . . . [And] this specific inevitability in our situation is yet another weakness of the national liberation movement.⁸

By virtue of their position, members of that stratum were those who soonest became aware of the nature of foreign domination and thus of the need to act in order to remove it; and:

this historic responsibility is assumed by the sector of the petty bourgeoisie that, in the colonial context, one might call *revolutionary*: while the other sectors retain the characteristic hesitation of this class, or else ally themselves with the colonialists so as to defend, albeit illusorily, their social position (original emphasis).⁹

But would this revolutionary segment necessarily remain true to its responsibility? Would its 'class suicide' prove irreversible? Cabral neither thought so nor said so: and the questions remaining open ones would influence the whole further process of struggle for anti-colonial liberation, and then, as was seen so clearly in Bissau before and during November 1980, the post-colonial effort. Meanwhile, and very patently by 1966, there was no doubt that the revolutionary segment's 'suicide' was not only far advanced, but was proving fruitful in its reincarnation. Former clerks and their kind, and even a handful of highly trained intellectuals (for example, José Araújo, Vasco Cabral, Fidelis Almada, to mention only three), had come into the movement and sunk their social and moral identity into the embrace of the village masses, living as peasants, fighting or working in forests and swamplands, learning local languages, eschewing privileges. This was the actual process and experience from which, at Havana, Cabral could elaborate his argument that the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie had only one road if it were not to betray itself; and that was: 'to strengthen its revolutionary consciousness; to repudiate the temptations to become "bourgeois" and the natural pretensions of its class mentality; and to identify with the classes of the workers'.¹⁰ Then came the well-known formulation:

This means that in order to play completely the part that falls to it in the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class, so as to be restored to life in the condition of revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of their people.

This alternative – to betray the revolution or to commit suicide as

a class – constitutes the dilemma of the petty bourgeoisie in the general framework of the national liberation struggle. The positive solution, in favour of the revolution, depends on what, recently, Fidel Castro fittingly called the development of revolutionary consciousness.¹¹

Again it was this development, inside Portuguese Guiné, that precisely formed the process on which Cabral could stand and know that he stood, by this time, on good ground. The little group of 1956 had greatly grown in numbers; more important still, it had gone far to change its socio-cultural nature. Having thus changed, it had led to a situation, by 1966, in which it was already clear that the colonial dictatorship no longer held the initiative, while the PAIGC had become a ‘vanguard party’ with increasing mass participation. The politics of liberation were now at large among this people, and it was the revolutionary segment of its petty bourgeoisie that had forced open the gate.

A segment, of course: even, still, a small one. Most of the petty bourgeoisie had fled into exile or remained in the service of the colonial regime. Some of the latter, later still, would accept a ‘junior partnership’ in the dictatorship’s fruitless programme for a ‘better Guiné’ (*Guiné melhor*) and would connive not only in the murder of Cabral but also in efforts to set up a rival ‘movement’ under Portuguese guidance (FUL: Frente Unida de Libertação). The bulk of the Guiné petty bourgeoisie, even at the end of the war, was still openly or covertly on the side of the colonial regime.

* * *

Against this record it seems rather more than a pity that otherwise thoughtful observers should blandly affirm that Cabral’s ideas were incompatible with reality. But leaving this aside as another if incidental warning on the dangers of hasty judgement, one may still ask why Cabral should have cared so greatly to elaborate and argue formulations open to controversy even among those whose sympathy and support the PAIGC greatly wished to secure and hold? It is a useful question because it takes one directly into the workings of his mind, and the ways in which he conceived the realities of his time and place.

There were here, it has seemed, two cultural constructs of pressing relevance. One was (or still is?) concerned with the overhang of colonial racism and its effects not only on colonised Africans but also on non-colonised peoples, especially in the imperialist countries. The other – which we will come to in a moment – was (or still is?) concerned with the nature of marxist or *marxisant* thinking about the roles to be played by revolutionary groups or ‘proto-classes’. So far as both were important, Cabral and his comrades in the lusophone liberation movements suffered an especial disadvantage. They carried a heavier handicap than

others. For they came from colonised peoples of whom little was known outside their frontiers, sometimes nothing at all, but whose capacities were regarded as being still smaller (if that were possible) than those of British- or French-colonised peoples. They had to make good their right to be heard, and respected, from the shadows of a double and extremely deep provincialism: the provincialism of Portuguese culture but also, below that, the provincialism of peoples despised even by Portuguese culture. Most of the reformist or quiescent petty bourgeois in these colonies never succeeded in emerging from that isolation and sense of inferior value. Even to this day one can find clusters of them (in Bissau, Luanda, Maputo, elsewhere) capable of falling into the grossest illusions and superstitions about the nature of the world in which, often to their persistent and astonished scepticism, they are now called to live and work. If any of them are thinking about suicide, it can only be by means of alcohol.

Like others in his pioneering group, onwards from the middle 1950s, Cabral saw it as imperative to break through 'the wall of silence built around our peoples by Portuguese colonialism'.¹² Only thus could they attract understanding and help from the outside world. Only thus – still more important – could they or those who sought to lead them become capable of reducing their provincialism, ending their isolation, and so, little by little, mastering their condition. It may be said that all of Cabral's early efforts were aimed at making that breach through 'the wall of silence', and ensuring a two-way traffic through it – a traffic of facts, new ideas, fresh confidence.

These pioneers set themselves to learn, but also to explain. They found this difficult at home, because of a repression that was greatly intensified after about 1955. As to explaining, they found this still more difficult abroad, because of the myths that the repression had used in defence of itself, and, as Cabral recalled in 1967, used:

Not without success, as shown by an incident during the second All-African People's Conference in Tunis during 1961, where we had some difficulty in being heard. One African delegate to whom we tried to explain our situation replied in all sympathy: 'Oh, it's different for you. No problem there – you're doing all right with the Portuguese.'¹³

Even a politically-minded African in 1961, after repeated massacres of anti-colonial protesters in Angola, Guiné and Mozambique (not to speak of mass shootings on Sao Tomé in 1953), could still say that. So a great deal of patient explanation was required as to the real condition of the peoples in the Portuguese colonies, and then, as things developed, as to the real ability of the leaders of those peoples to find effective strategies of anti-colonial action, and deploy them. This was all the more difficult in years when ignorance of the 'Portuguese position'

went hand in hand with an equally general assumption that merely constitutional or political pressures, of course with a little carefully fostered 'trouble' now and then, would be enough to bring decolonising change. Wasn't this, after all, the comforting reformist lesson taught by so much of British and French African experience?

Along the way, explanation also had to deal with attitudes of a different sort; and it was these, more than anything else, that may most probably be seen as holding the key to the motives behind Cabral's 'lectures abroad', and behind other such 'lectures' by his comrades from Angola and Mozambique. These attitudes derived from one or other of two chief assumptions, or from both at the same time. Foreign sympathy and support might accept the need for revolutionary action in the Portuguese colonies. But such acceptance tended to have its own strong preconceptions about how, when, and by what means this action should be opened and advanced.

One of these assumptions was that applicants for aid from the Portuguese colonies could not be expected to know the necessary answers, and must be provided with them. Thus it came about, in 1960, that the relevant delegate of the Algerian Front of National Liberation, who happened to be Frantz Fanon, urged both the MPLA in Angola and the PAIGC in Guiné (FRELIMO, in Mozambique, had yet to emerge) simply 'to begin' their armed struggle. If they would only set aside all further delay and begin, the peasants would rally and insurrection would irresistibly widen almost of itself. The MPLA in that moment was unable to 'begin', at least with any hope of consistent success, whereupon Fanon, finding that Holden and his UPA (later, FNLA) were ready to start an insurrection without having prepared it inside the country, threw Algerian military and political aid behind that fruitless 'movement'. Disasters accordingly followed. Cabral and the PAIGC, for their part, were well advanced with their plans but were still not ready for insurrection; they blankly refused 'to begin' and were roundly insulted for thus having minds of their own.

Making their analysis of what could be done in Guiné and Cape Verde, and by what means, they ran into a second assumption then common on the left (the right, of course, either ignored or persecuted them). This was that the colonial revolution must take its line and measure from the revolution in Europe. That particular ethnocentrism followed from the doctrinal conviction that nothing useful could be done, in any seriously revolutionary way, without working-class leadership. Since there was none to be found in Africa (or, at least, in tropical Africa), such leadership must be provided in Europe, or, in the case of Portugal's colonies, in Portugal. Any such prescription must seem perfectly unreal to latterday eyes, but in those years it had its power. However hopeless from an African standpoint, some time was required to overcome it. The crucial date in this context seems to have been 1957, and applied

necessarily to the communist movement: necessarily, of course, because there was no other movement or party in Portugal committed to decolonisation. The Portuguese party agreed at its clandestine congress of that year to cease trying to launch African territorial branches (only one, it seems, had in fact been tentatively formed: in Angola), and to accept that Portuguese communists would throw their support behind new movements or parties of national liberation (two of which – PAIGC and MPLA – having been founded some months earlier).¹⁴ One may note in passing that this is what Portuguese communists in the colonies, often with outstanding courage, then did; few of them escaped long imprisonment, torture, or death at the hands of the dictatorship.

It still remained to argue the analysis, reached by these nascent liberation movements, on the broad terrain of the left. There were those in Europe or America, for example, who wished to believe that the peasants were to be regarded as the chief initiating force for revolutionary change: when, by all the evidence on the ground, the peasants would act as no such thing. There were those who added that the necessary vanguard party, even if it were to be autonomous in its choice of policy and timing, must somehow still be ‘proletarian’ in its composition: when, alas, the facts showed that no such basis could be reached, or, if reached by various stretchings of the term proletarian, could become capable of coherent action. There were even those – and this persisted almost to the end, notwithstanding every effort at explanation – who made a touchstone of revolutionary authenticity by setting up other ‘conditions of reliability’ drawn from a perfectly non-African experience, such as land nationalisation, the rapid incorporation of individual peasants in rapidly expanding cooperatives, and so on. Both the Milan and Havana lectures have to be read against this often difficult background.

Each form of provincialism – that of the colonialist overhang or that of ethnocentrism – led on in fact to the need for a sharp clarity of analysis; and no doubt the challenge was useful. One may think that Cabral would have deepened and refined his analysis in any case: it was the man’s nature to wrestle with the ‘here and now’ and make it yield positive solutions. But the dual challenge from sceptics and supporters was still a valuable incentive. In the early years, though much less later, he had time to respond to it. Most of his well-known formulations and proposals date from the time, before 1970, when the slow take-off of a protracted guerilla war gave him opportunities for standing aside from immediate tasks. Those were the years in which he struck out a solid claim to African originality of revolutionary action, and to African originality of thought in theorising that action and impelling it further.

By 1965 he had similarly composed his *Palavras Geráís*, his ‘directives’, for the continued advance of the PAIGC on the mainland and in the islands; and in this context there was really nothing further to say

until liberation came.¹⁵ I recall having asked him in 1966 (when I had not yet seen a copy of the *Palavras*) why he did not write a full account of PAIGC strategy and principles? His reply was that he had nothing to add to the *Palavras*. Having got so far, in other words, the experience of the PAIGC had become, in itself, sufficient to explain its nature, aims, and potentials: anyone who wished to know what these were could now come and see for himself or herself. By now, too, this experience confirmed Cabral's dislike of doctrinal labels. Apart from tactics on the international scene of politics, he considered that labels were a probable source of error. He was patient with those in distant lands who wanted him to proclaim a 'marxist revolution', a 'battle for socialism', or the like; but he seldom refrained from repeating, on such occasions, his reference to reality:

Every theory of armed struggle has to arise as the consequence of an actual armed struggle. In every case, practice comes first and theory after . . . If you really want to advance the struggle, you must make a critical assessment of the experience of others before applying their theories, but the basic theory of armed struggle has to come from the reality of the fight.¹⁶

As to his own ideology and that of the PAIGC, an answer must be drawn from their practice:

If you decide it's marxism, tell everyone that it is marxism. If you decide that it's not marxism, tell everyone that it's not marxism. But the labels are your affair . . . People here [in London, as it happened] are very preoccupied with the question: are you marxist or not marxist? Are you marxist-leninist? Just ask me, please, what we are doing in the field. Are we really liberating our people, the human beings in our country, from all forms of oppression? Simply ask me this, and draw your own conclusions.¹⁷

Offered to questioners of undoubted goodwill, this may sound somewhat impatient. In other circumstances he might have phrased it differently, and embarked on a restatement of his chief theses. But perhaps there was some reasonable ground for impatience on that occasion. Although political scientists for the most part, his questioners turned out not to have read his chief theses, although these had been handily available in English since the end of 1969. On top of that, three or four exponents of the Provisional Irish Republican Army had just sought to destroy the meeting (held in a lecture room at the University of London) on the grounds that Cabral was talking about Guiné and not about Ulster. Third, he was speaking in English, and his grasp of that language was still inadequate. It remains that Cabral believed most firmly by 1971 – when this particular meeting was held – that the development of the PAIGC was sufficient to speak for itself, whether in

demonstrating the point of process then reached or the meaning and direction that it marked.

* * *

There were many differences of application of strategy between that of the PAIGC and those of FRELIMO and MPLA, but the strategy itself was strikingly the same in all three cases. The reasons why this was so lie outside the concerns of this essay, though the clarity and force of Cabral's thought were certainly high on the list of them. One could pass from the liberated zones of one of these three movements to those of the other two, and find in each of them, if often under a different guise or stated in somewhat different terms, precisely the same policies at work and with much the same results. The underlying unity of action and thought was invariably impressive, even if the 'point of process' at any one time varied from one movement to the other. And since much the same has been true of post-colonial development, one may well ask what will be the further impact, generally in Africa or elsewhere, of the practice and theory of these lusophone liberation movements. Can they be seen to have introduced a new trend towards effective self-development? Do they indicate a qualitative advance on the road to progressive change? Will they appear, in twenty years' time or so, to lie at the start of new African modalities of struggle, organisation, understanding of socio-cultural and economic needs and possibilities? Even by 1981, there seemed to be reasons for thinking so.¹⁸ Whether or not that is agreed, the crucial legacy, of these movements in their years of warfare – the particular legacy, in our context here, of Amílcar Cabral – will in any case be found to originate in the practice of their liberated zones.

This practice developed from two principles. One of these was that no worthwhile success could be gained without a growing and ever more effective weight of rural (if you wish, of peasant) initiative in fighting and organising for anti-colonial change. The other was that this initiative could be evoked usefully – that is, purposively: on behalf of a *programme* for such change – only by a steady and continued converting of rural support or sympathy into rural participation. *Povo na manda na su cabeça*, 'Let people do it for themselves', as the Guiné-Creole slogan has it: otherwise 'it' would be done to them and could possess no culture-changing value. And, since one of Cabral's deepest moral and political convictions was that culture-changing value was what really counted, its promotion had to be a central test of good leadership.

In this respect the Portuguese colonial system and ethos had possessed their own legitimacy within the dynamics of imperialism. They had stopped the process of indigenous development of these peoples'

culture, and had interjected the culture of imperialism. For that they had used the weapon of *assimilação* (essentially, of racism) so as to produce a stratum of 'African Portuguese', as well as their corresponding weapon of the *indigenato* (essentially, of domination) so as to de-personalise the mass of their colonial victims. Hence these colonial populations consisted of a very small minority of persons who were recognised as such, even with many reservations, because they had ceased to be Africans and had become Portuguese, and a very large majority of 'natives' who were in all important ways (whether by law or colonial usage) the mere objects of exploitation. No doubt the essence of this disembodiment belongs to every form of systematic dictatorship; but here in the Portuguese system and ethos it reached an often remarkable extreme of alienation. Anyone who cares to wade through the colonial literature will see as much. In a thousand ways, abrasively or sentimentally (or both), alienation was preached and practised by generations of governors, theorists, priests, poets, and the rest as a necessary 'colonial mission'. Every kind of coercion was found to be legitimate, not least by a Portuguese religious hierarchy whose general contempt for African humanity would be hard to overstate.

How far this culture of domination really destroyed the culture of the colonised peoples naturally depended on the circumstances, including the geographical location, of this or that people. For a few widely scattered communities, living outside the confines of intensive colonisation (usually identical with regions earmarked for white settlement), the colonial system and ethos seem never to have been much more than a spasmodic influence to be suffered or evaded as a calamity coming entirely from 'outside', and, as such, always rejected. That, largely, was the position and attitude of ciMbunda-speaking communities and their neighbours in eastern Angola. They continued to worship at their woodland shrines even as late as the 1970s, and seldom knew a word of Portuguese. They had long since lost their traditional chiefs (in fact, by the middle 1920s), but retained a strong sense of their own identity. They were persecuted, but not alienated. They still stood, if painfully, on their own ground.

There were other such cases. Yet for most of these peoples, living under the heel of the system, mere endurance without acceptance was much more difficult, and sometimes it was impossible. More than others, these peoples went far towards 'losing their own history'. As rural multitudes sought relief from rural starvation in ever greater numbers after the 1940s, the towns became the home of populations for whom the old values had lost their power to save, but for whom the new values meant *assimilação* (or its simulacrum) and imposed accordingly a further alienation. In between these 'categories' – never, in any case, clearly defined or cut-and-dried in their limits – there were of course many diversities of level and stability. We do not know enough about

that yet. Much more study will be required before we can approach the inner thinking of most of these colonised communities. Yet we know enough to be sure that one or other form of imposed alienation had spread confusion, decay, and sore loss of self-confidence.

How to make this good, how to reverse the trend of despair? How to give back to these communities the conviction of being able to master their own destiny? They had possessed that conviction in the past, but it was no good trying to return to the past. For national liberation to have a meaning that went beyond a mere change of masters, Cabral held that its mode of action must introduce a culture-changing process capable of stemming from pre-colonial development, but, at the same time, of assuming entirely new dimensions of independent self-realisation. A valid system to replace and overcome colonial values could never be a reversion to those of the past, even if any such reversion were in any case practicable. On the contrary:

Our cultural resistance [to colonialism] consists in the following: while we scrap colonial culture and the negative aspects of our own culture, whether in our character or in our environment, we have to create a new culture, also based on our traditions but respecting everything that the world today has conquered for the service of mankind.¹⁹

The full development of a new cultural hegemony, through the action of liberated peoples, would have to come after the smashing of the colonial system and years of independent effort in the building of a new community. But the launching of this new culture, at least in its essentials and foundations, was the central aim of the liberated zones, and of their democratic self-organisation. That was what had to be done, no matter how hostile the circumstances; without it, nothing else would count for much.

This was the synthesis, highly original in its forms and methods, that combined the short-term need with the long-term need. Short-term: because the means of participation arising from those types of self-organisation were vital to the 'mobilisation' (PAIGC parlance, meaning participation) of ever larger numbers of rural people, and thus to the winning of the war. But also long-term: because that same participation was vital in a deeper sense. It was vital to the opening of minds and the uniting of wills out of which, in due course, a new culture could steadily take shape and grow into command of the future. Hence the 'war aim' marched together with the 'peace aim'; and perhaps it is in this synthesis that one may best measure the power of Cabral's conception of progress. Few outside observers perceived this at the time, and even fewer outside commentators. At one extreme of all those, there were colonial apologists or propagandists who saw the process as being one of coercion. Armed militants 'conscripted' rural people, and 'punished' any

who held back. No such thing would have been in any case possible, but the impossibility never prevented it from being alleged. At another extreme, there were those who wished to sympathise with the anti-colonial struggle, but could never understand the difference between the fake movements (such as UNITA in Angola) and those (such as MPLA in Angola) whose strength came from the processes of expanding participation.

The truth of the liberated zones, by contrast, was one of partial, painful, but always stubborn effort towards a liberating of minds that was mental and moral, in that it was essentially political, even more than it was a physical freeing from colonial oppression. This was also why the anti-colonial wars had to be conceived and fought as 'struggles of long duration'. Given Portuguese military superiority in arms and numbers of troops, these wars could not be won quickly. Just as surely, however, they would be lost if they were won quickly, for in that case they would be won before the culture-changing process had time to get into its stride and make significant gains.

Cabral argued the absolute priority of this culture-changing process in many lectures and addresses, as well as in countless conversations 'internally' or 'externally'; and it would be out of place to repeat him here. All that he said and thought on the subject was well enough drawn together in his Syracuse lecture of 1970. How could it come about that this armed struggle did in fact put down the foundations of a new culture? 'Consider', he said in one of his most important passages, 'these features inherent in an armed liberation struggle' conducted on the principles of the PAIGC:

The practice of democracy, of criticism and self-criticism; the increasing responsibility of populations for the direction of their own lives; the creation of schools and health services; the training of cadres who come from peasant and worker backgrounds; and many other achievements. When we consider these features, we see that the armed liberation struggle is not only a product of culture. It is also a *determinant* of culture. And this, beyond doubt, is the prime compensation to the people for effort and sacrifice which are the price of their warfare (original emphasis).²⁰

It may be important to insist that these features were not identified *a priori* or by any preliminary blueprint. Going by early conversations with him (in London, 1960; in Conakry, 1961) I do not think that Cabral (with his leading colleagues, most notably Aristides Pereira) had any detailed plan for what was to be done in eventually liberated zones. They had ideas upon the subject, of course, but were well convinced that actual practice must be their guide. Given their principles, they believed that life in its richness and variety would teach the necessary lessons. And so it proved. For the real attributes of the liberated zones emerged

in the course of winning them and working in them, especially at and after the critical party congress of February 1964 which, in the nick of time as it also proved, was able to make good the blunders and indiscipline that had begun to ruin the fighting movement, and then, having done that, to identify the new initiatives that needed to be made.²¹ Hence Cabral's characteristic insistence (parallel, one may note, to Samora Machel's in Mozambique and Agostinho Neto's in Angola) that 'practice comes before theory'. The 'features' listed in his Syracuse lecture – whether in the fragment I have just quoted or in other passages – were precisely those that practice had proved to be fruitful. Their *determination* of a new culture – of its foundations, of its early outlines – was no kind of theoretical claim, much less a theoretical abstraction: most exactly, it was the *achieved* product of a particular practice and experience.

That the further development of 'full maturity' of this new culture, direct product of mass participation in liberated zones, was not and could not be guaranteed – any more than the 'class suicide' of a widening number of the petty bourgeoisie and their reincarnation as revolutionaries – was and is beside the point. I am very clear in my mind that Cabral never thought that any such process could be guaranteed: his optimism was of no utopian kind. The affirmation that he made was a different one. He affirmed that only this process, and no other, could open the way to a true development: initially, of a liberation movement fighting for power and winning it, and then, later, of a liberation-movement-in-power that would be capable of continuing to act as the determinant of an independent and progressive culture. He would have greatly condemned the resort to *coup d'état* in the Guinea-Bissau of November 1980. He would not, I think, have been as greatly surprised by it in any essential way. The dialectics of process were what, among many other things, he thoroughly understood.

The facts showed, meanwhile, that the determinant was fruitfully at work, as each of a number of foreign observers in the liberated zones of the PAIGC had noted or continued to note in his or her own way.²² Thanks to a common effort for united aims, the thought and behaviour of leaders converged on those of the peasant mass, shedding their 'petty-bourgeois' prejudices of 'superiority', learning a new respect for village people, enriching their grip on reality. While:

on their side, the mass of workers and, in particular, the peasants, who are generally illiterate and have never moved beyond the confines of the village or region, in contact with other categories shed the complexes which constrained them ... understand their situation as determining elements in the struggle ... break the fetters of the village universe to integrate gradually into the country and the world ... and become fitter to play the decisive role as the principal force of the liberation movement.²³

Encapsulated in what Cabral said to his Syracuse audience, all this was going on in Cubucaré, Quitáfine, Como, Tombali, Kinara and other districts. And it was because it was going on that the movement could win a strategic initiative by 1968, clear the colonial armed forces and administration from more than half the country by 1972, and go on to clear them from the rest of it in 1974. It was because all this was going on, and in countless ways, that Cabral, if then posthumously, was to be awarded his unique title, *Fundador da Nacionalidade*, Founder of the Nationality. Not, please note, Founder of the Nation, because the nation was and is a collectivity and necessarily founds itself, but founder of the process whereby this collectivity could (and does) identify itself and continue to build its post-colonial culture.

This, then, is the process through which one must seek for the subtle truths of development within the system and potentials of the national-liberation struggle of the PAIGC. Outside Africa, and sometimes inside, many have argued – all too understandably in view of the Stalinist outcome – that Lenin’s concept of the vanguard party must inevitably lead to a party dictatorship within ever-narrowing limits. Given that the PAIGC was a vanguard party, and that its leadership was both self-appointed and, at least in those years self-perpetuating, how could the peasantry or other ‘proletarian’ strata (in so far as these existed) then play a decisive role? How could there be an increasing democratisation of state power, or, at least, of power to control the state? The Lenin of the middle of 1917 might look towards a time, after revolution, when the soviets – the mass-elected committees of local and then national power – should effectively rule. What came after outside intervention, civil war, and great disasters was something very different, as everyone knows. All power to the soviets became all power to the central committee, and then, soon enough, to the controller of that committee.

Cabral never formulated or, as I believe, felt the need to formulate any specific reply to this large question; but just as certainly he thought about it. I have the best of reasons for knowing that he was thinking about it in the very weeks before his murder, because he told me so. At that point he was thinking in institutional terms: how best to organise a separation of powers and functions between state and party, how best to endow the ‘soviets’ of Guinea-Bissau – the elected committees of self-government in the liberated zones – with a political identity that should not become, in any restrictive sense, a party identity. (It went without saying that all these committees saw themselves as part and parcel of the PAIGC – ‘our Party’ – but this affiliation needed to be something different from being branches of the PAIGC.) Immediate answers were provided by developments then in motion. The previous year had seen a general election by

secret ballot and adult suffrage, throughout the liberated zones, for regional committees. These in turn, during November, had elected their representatives to a People's National Assembly (PNA). This PNA, it was decided by December, would have its first session sometime after the middle of 1973. It would have the supreme legislative power, and would proclaim the independence of a republic of Guinea-Bissau, even if the colonial armies still held part of the country. (This first session actually took place in September 1973, eight months after Cabral's murder; and the planned decisions were taken.)

At a deeper level, however, I believe that Cabral was thinking of the crucial cultural determinant. The vanguard party must continue to lead, reinforced by continuing new intakes from the product of the determinant – the product, that is, in terms of men and women formed and prepared by the struggle. Yet the dialectics of the process would ensure a synthesis, as between vanguard and masses, whereby democratic control would increasingly emerge. There had been no such control in 1963, when the armed struggle had begun: there had only been colonial dictatorship. Now there was some, and certainly far more than a few years earlier. Progressively, as the democracy of the liberated zones grew stronger, there would be more. This initiation and extension of democratic control, after all, was what the process had proved it could achieve. Politically speaking, that indeed was the essence of the process.

This synthesis, in turn, would produce its antithesis. Naturally: and an antithesis between a politically *lumpen* petty bourgeoisie (concentrated, largely, in the colonial capital, Bissau) and a politically developed movement of liberation would surely be amongst them. For *a luta continua*, the struggle for liberation continues: and the notion that history is a series of disconnected 'situations', rather than a dialectical interplay capable of retrogression as well as progress, belongs in any case to a philosophy in which Cabral had no part.

In the measure that the crucial determinant, the builder of a new culture, could hold its ground and maintain its creative influence, in that same measure would the peoples of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde truly come to govern themselves and make their own history. Fine words and promises could have little value, or none: what would decide, always, remained the degree in which the determinant was really at work. New laws and structures would help, shaping a system that would be anti-racist, anti-chauvinist, targeted against every form of systemic exploitation and therefore anti-capitalist; but these would be an empty shell unless they were applied with the strength, resilience and potential of an ever-extending democratic control. And by the end of 1972 Cabral knew that the concept of an ever-extending democratic control – and, readily, the means to

realise it – were rooted deeply in the liberated zones. He had worked for that, ever since the congress of February 1964, with unbending purpose. Behind the scenes of military success, it was perhaps his greatest achievement.

* * *

What would he have done and said about many issues, great or small, if only the assassins had failed and he had lived into the time of complete territorial liberation? It remains tempting to wonder. The legacy of his work ensured many new gains: a final territorial liberation of exemplary lack of violence (both in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde), fruit of the skill and courage of men and women who had undergone the necessary process, the all-decisive influence of the determinant, through the teaching and leadership that he had given. His own continued presence, one may think, would have enlarged those gains and better defended them, on the mainland, against the petty-bourgeois antithesis. No people, after all, loses an outstanding leader without paying a price, and the price, usually, is high. Already there were signs by 1977 that the price being paid for the loss of Cabral was becoming higher on the mainland than was clearly recognised or, at least, provided for. Some fairly acrid discussion at the third party congress (Bissau, November 1977) showed that a gap in trust and solidarity was already opening in Guinea-Bissau between countryside and capital; and the next two years seemed to achieve dangerously little in closing it. By November 1980, in any case, the petty-bourgeois antithesis had taken command to a point where a *coup d'état* of that month could even appear, in its early days, to have overthrown all that the PAIGC had stood and striven for.²⁴

In fact it soon became evident that the PAIGC could not so easily be cancelled out. The 'other side' of the antithesis was also there, and was clearly reinforced within several weeks of the day of the *coup* by the presence and action of militants, at many levels, who stood solidly by PAIGC practice and principle. A political struggle developed. Much about that struggle remained obscure a year later, when this was written. Yet there could be no doubt that the legacy of Cabral, the cultural determinant at work in the will and attitudes of thousands of party militants, remained a living force in Guinea-Bissau. That force in Cape Verde, meanwhile, continued to make fresh gains. This same year of 1980 was the one in which a large extension of democratic control in all the islands acquired fresh dimensions. These came with the launching of assemblies and committees of local government, *commissoes de moradores*, such as had never existed in any form before.

In conclusion I wish only to raise a single large issue, for Africa today, in the light of Cabral's thinking and of the implications of the process whereby the PAIGC destroyed colonial systems in Guinea-Bissau and

Cape Verde. This issue concerns the limits of nationalism. Cabral had long foreseen, as noted earlier in this essay, that decolonisation on the British or French pattern, adapting the 'western model' of the nation-state within frontiers traced by imperialism for the use of imperialism, could well lead to little more than an 'updating' of the old relationships of domination. But he had also seen that African use of nationalism, as a weapon to get decolonisation, was not an optional alternative to the use of some other weapon. There was no other weapon, or none that could have the least prospect of becoming effective. He was not in the least insincere in paying homage to Kwame Nkrumah as 'the strategist of genius in the struggle against classic colonialism'.²⁵ There was no other way ahead, after 1945, than the road opened to and by nationalism; and the petty bourgeoisie, however blinkered in its majority, was the stratum that must lead along it.

But what force could then be set against the neocolonial antithesis, the petty-bourgeois antithesis? The PAIGC, and other parties or movements like it, could answer this question from their long and varied experience. Beyond that answer, however, what could nationalism in any case then promise to an Africa divided by the frontiers of the colonial 'share out', chopped into pieces that often made no economic or political sense for post-colonial development and still subject to a 'world order' within which Africa remained in many ways a victim? I believe that Cabral had no illusions about the incapacity of nationalism, as such, to solve the basic problems of post-colonial development. If he was *Fundador da Nacionalidade*, insistent always that the PAIGC was concerned with *national* liberation, this was because the nationalism he believed in and fought for was always revolutionary. Yes, a liberated Africa must begin by becoming an Africa of separately independent nations. That was what the heritage of colonialism had dictated; and only an empty verbalism could find a way to reject this destiny. Reality enforced its acceptance. But reality, fully understood, was dialectical in its own development. The acceptance of an Africa of separately independent nations must lead, if development were to continue, to a progressive rejection of that outcome. The true vocation of these new nations – true in the sense of a capacity to yield a further process of development – was to overcome the colonial heritage by moving 'beyond nationalism'. Otherwise the tides of liberation would turn back upon themselves, as they had so manifestly turned in all those countries where the petty-bourgeois antithesis was in command, and carry those countries into a new colonialism.

How was a revolutionary nationalism to get itself beyond the limits of the nation-state – and this, of course, without in the least denying the rights and needs of as many autonomous national identities as Africa's diversity might require? I think that Cabral would have had much to say upon the subject, and that this, perhaps, remains the arena in which his

thought and action are most sorely missed. As it is, some of his answers were available before he died. They were embodied in his concepts of 'unity and struggle'. A revolutionary struggle, fighting and working for social gains as its primary and essential target, had already gone far to unite the diverse peoples and cultures of Guiné. Further action along the same lines would deepen and strengthen this unity. Balante had left their forests and gone to fight in the grasslands. Pepel, Mandjak, Mandinka had done the same or the territorial reverse. Guiné-Creole had become, increasingly, a *lingua franca* where none (and certainly not Portuguese) had existed before. These hitherto divided and often mutually hostile communities now stood on the same political ground. They strove for the same objectives. More and more clearly, they saw these objectives in terms of their unity as a nation of peoples.

Yet if Balante and Mandinka, Nalu and Mandjak, Pepel and Fula (the last, as it happened, developing the latest) could achieve this sense and fact of unity on the ground of common interests and objectives – in removing the colonial system and its coercions, in beginning to govern themselves in their own communities and then, after 1973, as a union of communities – what objective reason could exist for sealing off this process at the frontiers so arbitrarily drawn by inter-colonial agreement in the nineteenth century? Why should a revolutionary nationalism not grow in time, organically, regionally, into an internationalism? What other destiny could now lie ahead of liberation-movements-in-power except frustration and defeat?

Such questions were never posed in those years; and perhaps it is needless to say this. They were vastly premature. If they remain premature today, however, this is only because the neo-colonial anti-thesis holds firm in the anglophone and francophone countries or in most of them, and is opposed, so far, only by a deepening crisis. There, the petty-bourgeois inheritors reign in their own interests and try to wrest what gains they can from 'imperial partners', while the gap between countryside and town grows ever wider with each widening of the gap between the few with wealth and the many without. Even intelligently remedial steps towards reorganisation such as began to appear towards the end of the 1970s (as with the Economic Community of West African States) are only steps taken 'from the top down': agreements between governments and not between peoples, and, as such, capable of yielding no radical advance. Reformist nationalism continues to dig its own grave. As the grave deepens, fewer and fewer persons in command are able to get their heads above the edge of it. To the tune of requiems sung in solemn chorus by hosts of foreign experts or would-be *fundi* of one profession or another, often on very comfortable (and comforting) salaries, the funeral proceeds. The frontiers are there, the frontiers are sacred. What else, after all, could guarantee privilege and power to ruling elites?

Yet the peoples, it would seem, see matters differently. They have their own solutions to this carapace accepted from the colonial period. The frontiers, for them, remain a foreign and unwanted imposition. What the peoples think upon this subject is shown by their incessant emigration and immigration across these lines on the map, as well as by their smuggling enterprises. So that even while a 'bourgeois Africa' hardens its frontiers, multiplies its frontier controls, and thunders against the smuggling of persons and goods, a 'peoples' Africa' works in quite another way. For if the smuggling of goods and persons appears perverse and wicked when seen by governments in place, peoples in place can evidently find it right enough, and even natural.

Even so, smuggling is not a programme for a people's development. Today, it appears, a people's development can only be the task and product of a revolutionary nationalism in the nature conceived by Cabral and by those who have thought and acted, elsewhere, in the same direction. Exactly how this revolutionary nationalism will now take further shape and movement will remain, of course, as much a problem of practice as has every other forward step in the strategy of liberation. Whatever Cabral might now have said in this arena, he would surely not have prophesied. He would have looked for the practical route ahead: for the immediate steps that could lead on to others.

The unity of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde was one of those steps. He saw this unity as being able to give a historical culmination to all those ties and trends that have existed between the two countries – between the mainland and the islands – since, at any rate, the end of the sixteenth century. He saw it during the 1950s as a political necessity, because a struggle for liberation in the one would not avail without a corresponding struggle in the other; and this, indeed, is what was repeatedly demonstrated through the years of armed conflict. He saw it, furthermore, as a guarantee that the most could be got for each country, from the gains of anti-colonial liberation. And then, looking ahead again, he also saw this unity as a logical development of anti-colonial struggle. If peoples in many ways so different from each other as those of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde could thus find common ground and use it to good mutual purpose, then the nature of their anti-colonial liberation would reveal its fuller potential for Africa's post-colonial liberation: for moving 'beyond nationalism', for climbing out of the neocolonial grave, for broadening the route to radical renewal.

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- 3 E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Essays in Social Anthropology* (London, 1962).
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 5 G. Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania* (London, 1980), p. 228.
- 6 In T. Hodgkin, *Vietnam: the revolutionary path* (New York, 1981), pp. 228-9.
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- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 12 A. Cabral, 'Foreword' in B. Davidson (ed.), *The Liberation of Guiné* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 9.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
- 14 Private source. If the circumstances of this necessarily clandestine congress, in its bearings on Portuguese colonies, have found publication, this is unknown to me.
- 15 *Unity and Struggle*, op. cit., pp. 224-50.
- 16 A. Cabral, *Our People are Our Mountains* (London, 1971), p. 20.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 18 Compare this with the development of practice and policy by EPLF, Eritrea; ZANU, Zimbabwe; ANC, South Africa, and others.
- 19 A. Cabral, 'Resistência cultural', seminar paper at PAIGC conference of cadres, 19-24 November 1969.
- 20 *Unity and Struggle*, op. cit., pp. 152-3.
- 21 See B. Davidson, *Africa in Modern History* (Harmondsworth, 1978), ch. 30 (US edition, *Let Freedom Come*, Boston, 1978).
- 22 For example, G. Chaliand, *Armed Struggle in Africa* (New York, 1969), original French version, *Lutte Armée en Afrique* (Paris, 1967); B. Davidson, *The Liberation of Guiné*, op. cit., republished with new chapters as *No Fist is Big Enough to Hide the Sky* (London, 1981); L. Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau* (Uppsala, 1974); S. Urdang, *Fighting Two Colonialisms: women in Guinea Bissau* (New York, 1979).
- 23 *Unity and Struggle*, op. cit., p. 152.
- 24 So much was evident, in days immediately following the coup, from many statements of the coup-makers: from their rabid accusations of Cape Verdean domination; from their initial release and acceptance of the turncoat PAIGC leader, Rafael Barbosa, who had made himself a leading tool of the colonial regime in its war against the PAIGC; from the jubilation of anti-PAIGC 'circles' and groups in Lisbon and elsewhere outside the country; and from much else to the same effect. I can myself easily imagine Cabral's scalding contempt for these 'new leaders', who then said, repeating the propaganda of the defeated colonial regime, that the people of Guinea-Bissau had been colonised by those of Cape Verde. I can as well picture his rage at seeing the institutions of democratic control, notably the national council of the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau (of which the principal coup-maker had long been the chairman), pushed aside and then abolished by militarist action. I can also think that Cabral would have taken, in 1978-9, certain steps that were not taken, and would have acted against other steps that were taken. For some initial discussion of the background and consequences of the November 1980 coup, see Lars Rudebeck, 'The class basis . . . in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique' (Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1983); L. Dowbor, *Guiné Bissau: a busca da independência económica* (Sao Paulo, 1983); B. Davidson, preface to *No Fist is Big Enough to Hide the Sky*, op. cit.
- 25 'Homage to Nkrumah', in *Unity and Struggle*, p. 115. I can recall several conversations in which he insisted on the sincerity of that homage. It was all the more convincing because he had been well aware of Nkrumah's limitations while in power in Ghana, and admired Nkrumah's personal development during the last years of exile.

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Less than human nature: biology and the new right

Human nature, as an explanation of our social ills and as a justification for social formations, is firmly back on the agenda in Britain today. And in part because of the abandonment of human nature by the left, the vision we are offered is that of the right. That human nature is a term bandied about by politicians of the right from fascists to Tory wets, and that they use the term in a variety of different ways should not surprise us. But it is with the specific theoretical positions of the 'new right' that we are most concerned here, for these may be taken as the coherent cutting edge of an ideology which mainstream politicians wield more pragmatically.

Both of the two strands of the new right – the economic libertarians of the Adam Smith Institute and the strong state authoritarians around the *Salisbury Review*, edited by Roger Scruton – have a specific theoretical commitment to a view of human nature which is firmly grounded in biology. This is easier to see in the case of the libertarians, underlying whose *cri de coeur* about the growth of state power, or even the monetarism of Milton Friedman, is the Hayekian tradition of individualism, with its emphasis on the priority of the individual over the

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collective. That priority is seen as having both a moral aspect, in which the rights of the individual have absolute priority over the rights of the collectivity, and an ontological aspect, so that the collectivity is nothing more than the sum of the individuals which make it up.

Philosophically, this view of human nature goes back to the emergence of bourgeois society in the seventeenth century and to Hobbes' view of human existence as a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, a war of all against all, leading to a state of human relations manifesting competitiveness, mutual fear and the desire for glory. For Hobbes, as today for Hayek, it followed that the purpose of social organisation was merely to regulate these inevitable features of the human condition. And his view of the human condition – even in those dim and far gone pre-sociobiological days – derived from his understanding of human biology; it was biological inevitability which made humans what they were. As we will see, modern sociobiology improves on Hobbes by even deriving cooperation and altruism from innate competitive mechanisms.

The alternative, Scrutonian position, with its authoritarian emphases, seems at first sight removed from the Hobbesian tradition – even Platonic in its view of humans as possessed of fixedly unequal qualities and the need for the masses to be regulated to the finest degree by an authoritarian state. It is, however, but the other side of the same biological coin. For if human existence is in the Hobbesian sense when unregulated nasty, brutish and short, the differences between Scruton and Hayek become those of the degree of regulation necessary to control the brutishness. For Scruton, paradoxically, it becomes the task of the state to uphold inequality and assert individualism.

The scientific elements within both Scruton and Hayek's writing are concerned with the apparently biologically fixed nature of human needs, located in physiology, the irreducible nature of typological and individual human differences (between races and, for Scruton in particular, between the sexes), the origins of these differences in *genetic* differences, just as supposed human universals arise out of alleged genetic *similarities*, and the alleged evolutionary reasons for the fixation both of the universals and of the differences. It is this combination, which offers to explain social phenomena in terms of individual behaviour (societies are aggressive and wars occur because the individuals which compose them are aggressive, for instance) and which is first reductionist and second biologically determinist, that characterises the new right, as it did its ideological predecessors. Both Hayek and Scruton employ the elements of the theory with a rather broad brush; while Hayek is concerned to offer an account of human evolution to which we will refer in more detail below, Scruton deals in *ex cathedra* assertion. It has been left to their exegeticists to make the more specific links with sociobiological theory and hence to claim that the new science is in

accord with the social theory. A couple of examples may suffice:

Science now seems to have caught up with Adam Smith. To support an economic lame-duck is not merely bad economics, but apparently against our deep-seated nature. It will be a chilling thought to many, but it does begin to look as though we have a little bit of Maggie Thatcher in us all.¹

Bioeconomics says that government programs that force individuals to be less competitive and selfish than they are genetically programmed to be are preordained to fail.²

So just what is the scientific basis for these claims?

The rise of biological determinism

Within biology itself there has been a long-lasting tradition of reductionism, the origins of which are intimately connected with the history of the birth of modern science in general and biology in particular in the context of the emergent bourgeois order of seventeenth-century Europe.³ The implications of this strand within the development of evolutionary theory, and later in statistics, eugenics and psychometry, has often been discussed, and may be summarised simply by saying that throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century genetic and psychological theory-making, experiment and observation were bound up closely with proposals for public policy and with ideology – from the arguments that poverty ran in the genes to those calling for eugenic sterilisation of moral degenerates and for restriction of immigration into the US by those of inferior intellect. The determinist arguments and spurious data on which such theories and proposals were based were refuted in debate by geneticists, anthropologists and social scientists through the 1930s and swept away politically in the aftermath of the holocaust, leaving a consensus amongst the majority of natural and social scientists which lasted until the mid-1960s and which emphasised the importance of the environment – of nurture over nature – in the formation of human traits.*

The re-emergence of biological determinism as a significant force both in scientific and ideological discourse can be conveniently dated to the appearance of Arthur Jensen's article in the *Harvard Educational Review* in 1969.⁵ The article, as so many subsequent determinist

* It is important to be clear that this emphasis, often reduced to a rather simplistic environmentalism, is certainly not the one which we ourselves would wish to offer in counterposition to biological determinism; the limits of such cultural or environmental reductionism, and the need to transcend naive nature/nurture dichotomies are discussed elsewhere.⁴

writings, did two things simultaneously: it commented on an assumed social and political problem, and claimed scientific validity for a hypothesis to explain the origins of the problem. Jensen, an educational psychologist, was concerned about the relatively poorer performance of US blacks than whites in schools. In the aftermath of Project Headstart, a compensatory education programme which was part of President Johnson's 'Great Society' initiative, Jensen claimed that the policy had failed, that social factors were not enough to account for observed black/white differences in IQ, and that therefore there must be a genetic explanation. Some 80 per cent of the differences in intelligence between individuals was inherited and:

there are intelligence genes, which are found in populations in different proportions, somewhat like the distribution of blood types. The number of intelligence genes seems lower, overall, in the black population than the white.⁶

Hence, no programme of social action could equalise the social status of blacks and whites, and blacks ought better to be educated for the more mechanical tasks for which their genes predisposed them. The claim of genetic inferiority of blacks was rapidly extended to the working class in general by Harvard psychology professor Richard Herrnstein and incorporated into public policy discussions by Nixon's advisers: thus Daniel P. Moynihan, advocate of the 'benign neglect' of the poor, referred to the winds of Jensenism blowing through Washington.

Jensen's claims crossed the Atlantic, in the hands of his former teacher (and Cyril Burt's student), Hans Eysenck, whose long history of pronouncements and publications on the inheritance of almost anything from intraversion/extraversion to consistency in answering questionnaires, political attitudes and wealth led him to conclude that:

It seems certain that whenever blacks and whites are compared with respect to IQ, obvious differences in socio-economic status, education and similar factors do not affect the observed inferiority of the blacks very much ... this inferiority ... cannot be argued away as being due to lack of motivation.⁷

For Eysenck, what was true for the blacks was true also for the Irish and the working class in general. Eysenck has remained a tireless propagator of these hereditarian views, and is one of the few scientific figures referred to here who has overtly maintained links with journals of the far right.

With or without the intent of its principal advocates, however, the issue of the genetic inferiority of blacks or non-Europeans in general runs as an open claim in the writings of overtly fascist and racist groups. Within the broader new right, the language of inferiority has been replaced by coded references to 'difference' and to 'alien cultures',

as when Le Pen, leader of the French National Front, refers to the existence of:

different races, ethnic and cultural groups in the world which ensures a distinction between people and nations ... I would not say that Bantus had the same ethnological aptitudes as Californians because this is simply contrary to reality ... it is evident that hierarchies, preferences and affinities exist.⁸

However, by this time, as we will see, the specific issue of genetic differences in intelligence had been subsumed within the much broader ambit of the claims by sociobiology that racism and nationalism were but natural extensions of tribalism, itself the product of a process of 'kin selection', which lies at the core of sociobiological theory. Irrespective of whether other ethnic groups were superior, inferior or just different, we were genetically programmed to wish to avoid them.

As the tide of biologically determinist theories rolled on, it became clear that it was not just intelligence which would be claimed to be inherited. The belief that madness – mental distress and disorder – is the result of faulty genes has never really lost its grip, and has been strengthened in recent years since the recession from the high point of the fashion for the social constructionism of Bateson, Laing and Foucault.⁹

In the wake of the US inner-city riots of the late 1960s, self-styled 'psychosurgeons' began to argue that there must be faults in the brains of the ghetto ringleaders, correctable not by social intervention but by recourse to knife, electrode or drug. By 1984 the leading US journal *Science* carried a paper claiming that the tendency to commit crime was itself carried in the genes. The methodology on which such claims are based is parallel to that used to demonstrate the inheritance of intelligence, and has been promptly re-analysed and criticised by the indefatigable Kamin.¹⁰ From the present point of view, however, the important point is the emphasis yet again being given to biological explanations for social discontents; on the existence, if not of criminal genes or criminal chromosomes, then at least genetic or chromosomal *predispositions* to crime. Such a biological emphasis even moved those inclined to offer environmental arguments to suggest that in the Toots, Brixton and St Pauls riots in 1980-81, the causation might be sought in the concentration of lead in the environment resulting from car fumes.¹¹ But for the spectrum of politicians of the right, the emphasis is on faulty or maladapted genotypes in those weaker citizens unable to adapt to the challenges of an industrial society, genes which do not allow them to get 'on their bikes' in the search for jobs or to break out of the cycle of deprivation.

The crucial ideological point of such explanations is not the precise biological mechanism involved, but that *any* explanation which locates

the cause of social distress in the biology of the individual serves as a victim-blaming mechanism essential to the methodological individualism of new right philosophy. Such weaker genotypes must, if we are to preserve the Darwinian edge that social evolution demands, be allowed, with regret, to go to the wall. That is the law – not of the jungle, but of biological theory-making – and it is offered not in a vindictive or punitive tone, not even in the voice of the prophet denouncing original sin, but in the weary but civilised tones of scientific law-enforcers (who don't make the law, merely interpret it).

The determined patriarchy

The ideological defence of the status quo, challenged by the rising claims of blacks and the social disintegration of the inner cities, found, as the 1970s wore on, that an even more fundamental challenge was being mounted by the new feminism. The biological naturalness of the sex/gender division in society was a conspicuous feature of post-Darwinian biological research and the ideological construction of women in the nineteenth century. Biologically-based arguments insisted that women were less capable than men of study or intellectual pursuit as a consequence of deficiencies in brain structure, the possession of a uterus or the irresistible pressure of hormones. Women's entry into higher education, suffrage and most areas of 'men's work' has been opposed on the grounds that they were constitutionally less capable than men for these roles. Such arguments, refined by the modern languages of neurobiology, physiology, endocrinology, psychology and genetics, have been extensively refurbished in the last decade in clear response to feminism.

The most conspicuous example of the genre is Steven Goldberg's book, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, which appeared in 1974.¹² Goldberg first reviewed the evidence that in virtually all existing societies, pre- or post-industrial, pre- or post-revolutionary, patriarchy persisted. The explanation he offers for this lies in different psychological abilities between men and women (men are cognitive and have better spatio-temporal abilities; women are affective and have greater linguistic capacities). These derive from differences in brain structure (especially between left and right sides of the brain) which are determined by sex-linked genes and hormonal differences which occur very early in development. Others interpret such differences in a variety of ways; for Goldberg they mean that men are 'naturally' dominant over women, a hormonally ensured dominance which merely changes its mode of expression depending on the social formation; if men have to fight to dominate, they will, if they have to kiss babies as politicians, they will do this too; women should therefore stick to what they do best – heed the call of their natural natures and not seek to emulate men; if

they do the latter, they will lose, for they are not competing on their own ground.

This neat picture painted by Goldberg, with its details filled in by Witelson, Geschwind and others,¹³ lacks only one dimension: why these differences should have emerged. And this, above all, has been seen as the task of sociobiology to add: the differences are *adaptive* – that is, they contribute to the continued evolutionary success of both sexes, and they emerge because of the different reproductive roles of the two sexes. Because for men the business of fathering takes but a few moments – what sociobiologists refer to as ‘male investment’ in reproduction – whereas for women mothering is a long, drawn-out process, men have an interest in roving and spreading their seed about, whilst women have an interest in ensuring the sexual constancy of their partners. Especially because of the long gestational and dependent period of the child, a division of labour emerges in which, as E.O. Wilson puts it:

in hunter-gatherer societies, men hunt and women stay at home. This strong bias persists in most agricultural and industrial societies and on that ground alone appears to have a genetic origin. My own guess is that the genetic bias is intense enough to cause substantial division of labour even in the most free and egalitarian societies.¹⁴

While for fellow sociobiologist David Barash:

Waging war is (and probably was) almost an exclusively male pursuit in all human societies. This is not to say that men are therefore smarter than women but simply that their greater size, strength and aggressiveness – all perhaps the evolutionary result of engaging in warfare – have given the average man a competitive edge over the average woman.¹⁵

The sex-gender division of labour is thus the consequence of the adaptiveness of the biological division of labour, and genes fixed in human evolutionary past now ensure that men are executives while women are secretaries.

There are two initial points to note about this type of analysis. The first is that, as we should not perhaps be surprised to find, the majority of the claimed ‘biological facts’ are either based upon faulty evidence, or of uncertain provenance or significance, or are simply assertions based upon speculation.¹⁶ Just as Kamin re-evaluated the supposed evidence for the genetic base of IQ and schizophrenia, so others, notably Fairweather and Dyer, have cast doubt on alleged cognitive differences between the sexes and even the notorious difference in spatio-temporal coordination, as emerging prior to puberty and the inevitable and inextricable concatenation of social and biological causations.

But from our present point of view, contesting the data and theories offered by sociobiology is not the main point; rather, it is to emphasise

the ideologically organising role played by the manipulation of their interpretations of the data. The quotations from Barash and Wilson are exemplary in this regard. When E.O. Wilson's *Sociobiology* first appeared in 1975, with the full weight of Harvard University Press's publicity machine behind it, Wilson was careful to distinguish his approach to work of ethologists like Ardrey, Morris and Lorenz, who had preceded him into the business of telling us 'why we do what we do'. Theirs, Wilson explained, were works of advocacy. His was a work of scholarship. (In similar vein, when sociobiologist Richard Dawkins was informed that his book, *The Selfish Gene*, was being used as the basis for racist propaganda, and was asked to dissociate himself from the New National Front which had quoted him, he judged it sufficient to respond that his work was above 'the ephemeral level of human politics'.¹⁷ Yet it is clear from the extracts from Barash and Wilson, and from others that follow below, that this is far from being the case. Characteristically, such sociobiologists adopt a double persona: on the one hand, claiming the objectivity of the scientist whose motivations and theories are neutral and above suspicion; on the other, cloaking social and political nostras in flights of ideological fantasy which are certainly not readily distinguishable from what the observer might *experience* as advocacy, made all the more persuasive precisely because it is offered as science – and therefore carries the cachet of 'objectivity'.

However, whatever the intent of the theorists, by the time claims for the biological bases of patriarchy have reached popular and political presentation, they lose any sense of being provisional scientific observations. They are set firmly into inevitability; the biological construction of gender differences becomes mere scientifically proven common sense. One newspaper report, for example, quoted the 'considerable displeasure' expressed by the women's movement over research which suggested that 'sexism . . . is a natural, inevitable and permanent feature of personality' and which challenges:

the view that sexual stereotypes are an invention of a male-dominated society and indicate instead that they arise, in part, from a biological programme, the legacy of millions of years of evolution which starts to unfold at birth.¹⁸

The argument of this article was that feminist claims that gender-specific behaviour is environmentally conditioned are refuted by 'scientific evidence' which shows that gender differences in behaviour are fixed. A similar argument has been made by Eysenck's colleague, Glenn Wilson, who specialises in writing about what he calls 'the sociobiology of sex differences', when he claims that the hegemony of social constructionist theories has led to a feminist 'witch hunt' which disallows alternatives. He goes on to argue that there is already greater equality between the genders than feminists admit, because 'men and women are

equal to the extent to which they are predisposed by their biological natures to behave in particular ways'. Finally, like others who disavow advocacy, he raises the question of the social policy implications of his feminism, concluding that 'there is a limit to the extent to which the feminist movement can override the natural inclinations of men and women by persuasion and political power'.¹⁹ (The trick of seeing themselves as Galileos, intent on bringing scientific truth to light in the teeth of powerful opposition, and therefore portraying the feminist, anti-racist and socialist critique of a sexist, racist and hierarchical society as if these critiques were manifestations of the dominant ideology, rather than the reverse, is characteristic of much writing in this area. Far from being the heroic minority scientific opposition of a Galileo or a Bruno, the new biological determinists claim their support from today's church and inquisition.)

The policy implications of genetic determinism in this context are also considered by E.O. Wilson in the second part of his trilogy (*Sociobiology* was the first), *On Human Nature*.²⁰ He outlines three types of policy which a society might adopt in response to the knowledge of biological constraints on sex-gender equality. First, it can condition its members so as to exaggerate gender differences; second, it can provide equal opportunities but do nothing else, and third, it could train its members to eliminate such differences. Wilson regards the first option as providing a society, 'richer in spirit, more diversified and even more productive than a unisex society', which could safeguard human rights while channelling men and women into different occupations. The second option would merely ensure that biology will out – men would be 'likely to maintain disproportionate representation in political life, business and science'.²¹ The third option would 'certainly place some personal freedom in jeopardy'. The assumptions are clearly both that sex-gender differences are desirable *and* that existing society offers women personal freedom. In any event, whatever we might wish to do to change gender inequalities, we will be constrained by the dictates of biology.

In so far as these views are in accord with 'common-sense' beliefs in the naturalness of existing gender categories, it is not easy to separate out the extent to which sociobiology has directly influenced the thinking of the new right, or whether the coincidence in views with those of politicians and ideologists is merely a reflection of a wider *zeitgeist*. The kinder-kuche-kirche view of women's place appears strongly in fascist writing – as it did in the 1930s; it appears also in Powell and Scruton. National Front publications are, as we have seen, particularly concerned to quote from scientific authority:

One has only to observe the degree to which male dominance and female passivity in sexual courtship obtains in the animal world,

likewise qualities of male aggression and female domesticity, to understand their fundamental biological basis. Such observations quickly demonstrate that 'feminist' talk of sexual roles being conditioned by society itself is the most puerile Marxist rubbish. Sexual and other behaviour differs between men and women simply because of differences in male and female hormone secretions which are governed by the sex chromosomes of our genes (sic).²²

Roger Scruton's diatribe against feminism is similarly based on biology and waxes lyrical about male sexuality: it is that which, by nature, is like a vector setting sail. Men are 'the victims of an impulse which ... is one of the most destructive of human urges, and the true cause of rape, obscenity and lust'.²³ For Scruton, the biological potential of reproduction is 'what it means to be a woman', who cannot be defined otherwise.

Meanwhile, as well as confirming women's domestic place in the sphere of reproduction rather than production, sociobiology also offers guidance as to the relations between the sexes. Wilson, reviewing the evidence, finds that men are 'naturally' polygamous, whereas women are monogamous; Dawkins goes on to speculate as to how genes 'for' male philandering might be advantageous to the male and therefore spread through a population. The argument is based on the assumption, referred to above, that because females have a greater reproductive 'investment' in their young than do males – sometimes argued on the relative size of egg and sperm cells, sometimes on mammalian viviparity – then it pays them to care for each individual offspring, whereas it aids the spread of the male's genes if he 'invests' less in each individual offspring he has sired but endeavours to sire as many as possible.

The argument extends from philandering to forced sexual intercourse. A characteristic of sociobiological discourse is the wholesale adoption of the language of human social relations and its projection on to the non-human animal world – the Beatrix Potter syndrome: there is slave-making and propaganda amongst ants, politics among chimpanzees. And we find reference to *harems* in baboons, *prostitution* in humming-birds, and *gang-rape* in mallard ducks and even dung beetles – to refer only to the terms descriptive of gender relations. For sociobiology, such acts, whether or not designated as rape, are the consequence of the male goal of maximising his chances of reproducing by mating with as many females as possible. For sociobiologist David Barash, even if human rape is 'by no means so simple as' what goes on between ducks, it is still squarely in the biological camp:

Perhaps human rapists, in their own criminally misguided way, are doing the best they can to maximise their fitness ... Another point: Whether they like to admit it or not, many human males are stimulated by the idea of rape. This does not make them rapists, but it does give them something in common with mallards.²⁴

It is not clear how Barash knows what turns on men who don't like to admit they are stimulated by rape and, a fortiori, how he knows what turns on mallard drakes, but such poetic licence is not an uncommon feature of sociobiologising of this sort. It is worth comparing Barash's account with Scruton's view that rape is the inevitable result of the sexual impulse of which men are the innocent victims. For Scruton, the cause of rape is 'the lust that seeks . . . to relieve itself upon her body' – if, that is, it is 'left to itself', which it will not be 'if a woman has anything to do with it'. Scruton appears not to understand not only that it is usually women who are raped, but that they would undoubtedly prefer that male lust were left to itself in such situations.

What is clear is that the traditional concept of the double standard and of the madonna/whore image of women is both at the core of Scruton's view of gender relations and is the masculinist hidden agenda of sociobiological fantasising about the nature not merely of human females, but of the females of other species too.

The claims of sociobiology

As should by now be clear, the claims of sociobiology go beyond their recruitment in the interests of defining the inevitability of the patriarchy, or defending the view that racialism and nationalism are encoded in our selfish genes. Wilson's *Sociobiology* and Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*, can be taken as representing the first appearance since Darwin's day of a *comprehensively* reductionist and biologically determinist approach to the interpretation not merely of human behaviour, but of all aspects of the social behaviour of animals. The extraordinary publicity attending the publication of Wilson's book – 600 pages of evolutionary theory by an expert on ants – its massive sales and extraction for popular magazines, and the appearance of a series of sequels, attests to the interest it aroused outside biology and the breadth of its claims. In the introductory chapter, 'The morality of the gene', Wilson defines sociobiology as 'the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behaviour . . . [including] . . . the adaptive features of organisation in the more primitive human societies'. The aim was nothing less than to encompass all human societies into an explanatory framework based on evolutionary biology. 'Sociology and the other social sciences, as well as the humanities, are the last branches of biology waiting to be included in the Modern Synthesis.'²⁵ There follows a biological explanation of such human cultural manifestations as religion, ethics, tribalism, warfare, genocide, cooperation, entrepreneurship, conformity, indoctrinability and spite. Dawkins, whose book was written contemporaneously with Wilson's, adds many more, from male philandering to female 'coyness'. Nor are Wilson and Dawkins content merely to describe the world; as we have said, policy conclusions flow from their

pens. True, Wilson is cautious:

If the decision is taken to mold cultures to fit the requirements of the ecological steady state, some behaviours can be altered experimentally without emotional damage or loss in creativity. Others cannot ... A genetically accurate and completely fair code of ethics must also wait ... If the planned society ... were to deliberately steer its members past the stresses and conflicts that once gave the destructive phenotypes their Darwinian edge, the other phenotypes might dwindle with them. In this, the ultimate genetic sense, social control would rob man of his humanity.²⁶

Dawkins, too, finds it appropriate to offer warnings of evolutionary doom awaiting those who transgress Darwinian imperatives (oddly, perhaps, for a man above 'mere human politics'). In *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins criticises the 'unnatural' welfare state where:

we (sic) have abolished the family as a unit of economic self-sufficiency and substituted the state. But the privilege of guaranteed support for children should not be abused ... Individual humans who have more children than they are capable of raising are probably too ignorant in most cases to be accused of conscious malevolent exploitation. Powerful institutions and leaders who deliberately encourage them to do so seem to me to be less free from suspicion.²⁷

This is strong language for books which eschew advocacy and lay claims to scientific objectivity (odd language, too, for a Darwinist in Dawkins' case, for much of the rest of his text is a hymn to the evolutionary merits of spreading one's genes as far and wide as possible).

The relationship between such biological claims and the philosophical stance of both wings of the new right should by now begin to be becoming apparent. They combine a Hobbesian/Hayekian individualism with dark hints that what is required is some sort of a morally authoritarian state which can ensure genetic fairness, and legislate to avoid us losing our Darwinian edge or even to avoid the undue reproduction of undesirable genotypes, which is familiar territory for one strand of the new right. What is more, they form a clear legitimation of the status quo, a panglossian paradigm marred only by the repeated hints that the decline in social Darwinian, Victorian values may already have resulted in some loss of fitness.

But they go further – if present social arrangements are the inevitable consequence of the human genotype, then nothing can really be changed. As Wilson puts it, 'the genetic bias is intense enough to cause a substantial division of labour even in the most free and most egalitarian of future societies'.²⁸ Small wonder, therefore, that it was soon called into play to offer a 'genetic defense of the free market' and that economists were offering parallels between the mathematical formula-

tions of the sociobiologists and monetarism,²⁹ to say nothing of a range of human activities running from the alleged upper-class preference for cunnilingus and fellatio to the universality (again alleged) of incest taboos and xenophobia.

Sociobiologists themselves declare a desire to avoid these political inferences and simultaneously seem actively to court them. Thus, David Barash cautions:

Concern has been expressed that human sociobiology represents racism in disguise: This is simply not true. Sociobiology deals with human universals that are presumed to hold cross-culturally and therefore cross-racially as well. What better *antidote* for racism than such emphasis on the behavioural commonality of our single species.³⁰

Unfortunately, however, it turns out that to sociobiologists such racism *may* be the product of one of these assumed universals. 'Nationalism and racism are the culturally nurtured outgrowths of simple tribalism', according to Wilson.³¹ It isn't, then, surprising that the National Front can conclude that there is a:

basic instinct common to all species to identify only with one's like group; to in-breed and to shun outbreeding. In human society this instinct is *racial* . . . The great question of our time seems to be whether European man, the pinnacle of evolution, will destroy – through the unnatural notions which are the modern product of his intellect – what his inherited instincts have striven through those eons of time to preserve.³²

It will be clear that in such speculations the method of sociobiology is, in one interesting sense, to turn Marx on his head: where Marx was to emphasise that the key to the past lies in the present, sociobiology's emphasis on evolution explains the present in terms of a hypothesised past, in which genetic traits for particular behaviours were favoured and therefore became fixed in the population. Hence the enthusiasm for evolutionary just-so stories, an enthusiasm shared with Hayek, who is committed to a demonstration that capitalist social forms evolved from earlier and more primitive 'tribal socialism'.

There are two points to be made here. The first is methodological. Both Hayek and these sociobiologists are concerned to draw parallels between changing human societies (human or social 'evolution') and the biological processes of evolution. The parallels they draw, however, involve fatal ambiguities of mechanism. On occasion, the evolution of human societies is supposed to occur by specific genetic mechanisms – for example, the alleged fixation of sex-linked genes for spatio-temporal perception in the male in human hunter-gatherer past. On other occasions, however, what is being invoked is *analogy*. In a less determinist

past, Darwinists such as Julian Huxley argued that, in humans, social evolution had in large measure superseded biological evolution as a mode of change in human populations. Dawkins offers instead a formal parallel procedure. Just as he believes that evolution in the biological sense is about the change of populations of isolated but self-replicating competitive units called genes, so, he argues, the components of human culture can be reduced to units called 'memes', which also self-replicate and compete for survival. A selection mechanism similar to that by which records arrive in and then fall out of the 'Top Ten' determines the fate of such memes. Dawkin's model has found little favour with other sociobiologists but has crept into the anthropological literature. Wilson, by contrast, offers a heavily mathematical proposal for the *co-evolution* of culture and biology, formalised in the least-well received of his trilogy, *Genes, Mind and Culture*.³³

When Hayek discusses human evolution,³⁴ he uses the term in a sense which may be read as Wilsonian or as analogic. Primitive societies were socialist, he argues, and today socialism represents an atavistic throwback to these early forms. The development of hunter-gatherer societies, however, produced a decisive break, in which the (male, inevitably) heroes are those who first initiated barter and exchange. From this grew the patriarchal family and the evolution of the morality of the market place, through a process analogous to natural selection. (Here Hayek performs an act of myth-making comparable to, though of course used for precisely contrary ends, that of Engels on the origin of the family and Sohn-Rethel in his derivation of abstract thought from the processes of exchange.)

But this Hayekian myth-making exemplifies the second point to be made here concerning the uses of evolutionary metaphors, and that is that in all probability his just-so story probably isn't true. The man-the-hunter version of the motor of human evolution has been sharply questioned by modern anthropologists, especially those working in an explicitly feminist framework,³⁵ who have made the point that gathering rather than hunting was likely to be the main source of human food requirements; in so far as this was a predominantly female activity, an alternative myth, in which females selected males that were not dominant and competitive but cooperative and nurturant, and therefore more likely to participate in child-bearing, is equally possible.

The method of sociobiology

We are not arguing, of course, that Hayek or Scruton or other new right ideologues were driven to their conclusions about the ordering of human society by reading sociobiology. Whilst they may have read Wilson (and National Front theoreticians clearly have), Hayek's

writings predate in many respects modern sociobiology, and Scruton's views derive from a philosophical rather than an explicitly scientific tradition. The point is different, and perhaps more interesting. It is that sociobiology and the new right share a common methodology, a reductionism which is specifically Hobbesian. Thus, sociobiology seeks the causes of social phenomena as located in the properties of the individuals who comprise society, and the properties of those individuals as located in genetic imperatives. Wilson's programme, as laid down in sociobiology, is indeed reminiscent of *Leviathan*: to explain and prescribe for the entire human condition, beginning with a few basic principles. Hobbes explicitly modelled his system on Galileo's method of reduction and recombination of a system. On this basis, humans become automated machines whose operation leads ineluctably to certain social phenomena. Sociobiology's Hobbesianism arrives via Darwinism, and for both Hobbes and Darwin, competition occurs not as a result of some fundamental property of organisms, but as the inevitable consequence of the automatic self-reproduction of a machine-organism in a world of finite resource. It is this derivation which new right philosophy shares with sociobiology.

The problems with the method of sociobiology lie precisely within this reductionism, even if we ignore the extent to which weighty conclusions and political nostras are mounted on the shakiest of evidence, and often on no evidence at all. The theoretical confluence is most strikingly apparent when we consider the theoretical constructs of sociobiology, its language system and its modes of mathematical analysis. Thus, sociobiologists observing the behaviour of non-human species apply to it *game-theoretical analysis*; they regard animals as adopting *investment strategies* designed to *maximise rewards* based on *cost-benefit analysis* and *optimisation procedures* in relation to *time-budgets* for *optimal foraging strategies*. Whereas it might be argued (though we would not, Dawkins certainly *has* endeavoured to defend his language in this way³⁶) that the use of terms like 'rape' or 'slave-making' to describe particular types of animal behaviour is 'merely' punning – the terms identified above are central to sociobiological theory-making, and the mathematical formulations adopted are formally parallel to those used in reductionist economic theories.

It is not surprising that monetarist economists find that sociobiology offers them biological sustenance for free-market theories, and that military strategists note that *arms-races* are to be found in the animal world too, because these phenomena were placed there by sociobiologists who derived their theories, not fallen from the sky, but from the very real human social world around them. The trick, of course, is to look at the biological world through viewing glasses distorted by social expectations, and then to turn those glasses back on the social world once more, to find that one's social theories are,

unsurprisingly, sustained by the biology. In this type of sociobiological theorising and new right philosophy, we see two mutually sustaining sets of beliefs, the two sides of a card-house.

The reductionist methodology of sociobiology, like that of the new right, decomposes social phenomena into merely the aggregates of the properties of the individuals which compose that society, using methods of reification. But it goes further, by arguing that the properties of individuals are determined by their genes, and that genes 'act in their own interests', which are those of self-preservation and self-replication. This is why, for Dawkins, we become merely lumbering robots programmed by our genes, with our brains as 'on-board computers'.³⁷ What the vigour of this language is intended to convey is that, in Dawkins' view, Darwinian selection acts only on the genes, and that therefore behaviour, human or non-human, is merely the gene's way of making another gene, a copy of itself.

Dawkins and other sociobiologists believe this because, unlike other biologists, they are committed to the view that selection acts *only* at the level of the gene. A less reductive, and more appropriate way of viewing the processes of selection is to see them as operating at multiple levels, the levels of gene, genotype (the ensemble of genes each person possesses), phenotype (the organism generated by the interpenetration of genes and environment during development), and populations of organisms.³⁸ However, once one is committed to the gene as the unit of selection, it follows that each gene is in some sense 'competing' with all other genes for replicative success, and the whole panoply of determinism follows. Sociobiologists never permit the existence either of multiple levels of analysis or complex modes of determination. They can't even see that, on their own model of competition between individual genes, it may well be in the most successful gene's interest (see how easy it is to use the language if one slips one's mind out of gear for a moment) to produce a phenotype which behaves cooperatively.

The problem of cooperative behaviour amongst organisms has proved to be of the greatest complexity for sociobiology, for if each gene competes with all others, how can self-sacrificing or altruistic behaviour evolve? For sociobiology, the answer lies in the observation that any individual shares 50 per cent of its genes in common with its brothers and sisters and, in varying degrees, with cousins and other relatives. Hence, a behaviour which might result in the destruction of the individual would be genetically advantageous, and spread by evolutionary processes, if it resulted in the saving of the lives, and hence the propagation of the genes of close relatives. This is the phenomenon of 'kin selection' first proposed by J.B.S. Haldane and given mathematical precision by William Hamilton in 1964.³⁹ Kin selection instantly became *the* central mode of explaining aspects of social behaviour which had hitherto puzzled evolutionary biologists because they appeared

to be to the individual's disadvantage, albeit to others' advantage (like the alarm call of a bird which spots a kestrel, thereby drawing attention and danger to itself but possibly protecting others). The alternative to kin group selection, that the behaviour involved activity 'for the good of the species' – so-called group selection – was incompatible with Darwinian mechanisms which involved selection at the level of the gene.

At once, it became clear that altruistic behaviour in humans – neighbours risking their lives to save a child from a burning house, the solidarity of striking miners or of a political movement – was nothing more than a perverse extension of the principle of kin selection, unless it could be argued that the neighbour or miner was calculating that self-sacrifice now would be rewarded by matching self-sacrifice later, in which case they were demonstrating what sociobiologist Trivers called 'reciprocal altruism', which was merely enlightened self-interest. It also became clear why we had a genetic imperative to support our kith and kin, and reject foreigners, for they did not merely have an alien culture, but alien genes too.

Thatcher, sociobiology would argue, was indeed obeying an evolutionary imperative when she defended 'our' kith and kin in the Falklands against the Argentinians, though she failed to calculate the number of our kith and kin who could be allowed to be killed in this exercise before the enlightened self-interest of the genes said enough was enough – just as she forgot – a sad genetic slip that – that there were shared genes in common with the Welsh-descended Patagonians too. Whilst it would be inappropriate to read too close a correspondence into the rise of kin-selection theory within ethology and sociobiology, and the replacement of collectivist with family – and essentially self-centred modes of social organisation at the centre of the political stage, both in Britain and the US (the two countries in which sociobiological theorising has taken strongest scientific and ideological root), the parallel is bound to be fascinating to anyone concerned with the social processes of science.⁴⁰

There is one final element in sociobiological method which must be added to complete the picture. Darwinian evolutionary processes are concerned with the phenomenon which, following Darwin himself, is described as fitness. The motor for evolutionary change is provided by the fact that like begets like, with minor variations, that all organisms produce more offspring than can survive to reproduce in their turn, and that hence those offspring which do survive to breed are likely to be those which are better adapted, or more fit in some way to their environment. The offspring of these more fit individuals are likely also to carry the trait which is the 'fitter' one, and hence, in due course, it will spread through the population. The issue of present concern becomes that of defining which of those multiple features of an organism's phenotype are the adaptive ones on which evolutionary pressures can act. About

this, as about human evolutionary origins, a host of just-so stories has grown up.

In this context, the tendency of sociobiology is to argue that whenever we see a common feature of the biological world around us, it must be adaptive; that is, it must be particularly well-fitted to serve a particular function and, further, that there must be genes for it, enabling it to preserve its form or even improve it across generations. In this sense, sociobiology is the equivalent of functionalism in sociological theory and, once more, there is a striking parallel between the biological and sociological modes of explanation. It is this feature of sociobiology, the so-called adaptationist myth, which has laid it so open to the charge of panglossianism. If we live in an unequal society, then this feature of our social organisation must be adaptive and the product of natural selection. It is here that the biological *metaphor* for the evolution of human societies becomes transmuted into a biological *mechanism*. If a trait exists, and is adaptive, then it must also be genetically determined; hence, there are genes 'for' all those features of our social organisation to which sociobiology claims privileged access, from xenophobia to philandering. It's all in the *gene's* interests, even if we don't like the consequences.

The trouble is that the grounds for arguing that a particular feature of behaviour, or indeed of physiology, that we observe is actually adaptive and therefore has been selected for are often very obscure. A particular trait may be contingent, the result of historical accident and the 'tinkering' nature of evolution in which change in the organism is always a response to present and past environmental contingencies, but has no way of plotting the future of the environment (if it had, the dinosaurs would never have gone extinct). Or it may be the inevitable consequence of structural constraints, or of some quite other feature which *has* been selected for.

Conclusions

The conclusions from this discussion of human nature theories, sociobiology and the new right are to be drawn in several different frames of discourse. For biologists, the inadequacy of sociobiological theorising and its highly ideological commitments is a salutary lesson. It points to the failure of the reductionist programme within biology, and the necessity to develop modes of analysis of complex biological phenomena which do justice to their complexity, their rich interconnections, their multi-layered degrees of order and the fact that the phenomena we study do not occur in isolation, in a frozen moment of time, and cannot be understood divorced from the fact that they are simultaneously process and product, history and structure. Because we lack the conceptual tools to approach biology in this way – or at least

the interesting biological problems – it is all the more important to beware of premature closure. The goal of Wilsonian sociobiology, rephrased in less triumphalist and imperialising language, is of the unity of the knowledge of the social and the biological – a goal which we cannot but applaud. But until we develop the modes of thinking – more holistic and less reductionist, more subjective and less objective, more dialectical and less static and mechanical – that this synthesis requires, we would do better to allow different disciplines their own integrity and ways of working; we do less harm to our own – and other people’s – knowledge of the world that way.

For students of the sociology of science, the ‘case’ of sociobiology, its extraordinary interconnections in methodology and conceptual structure with particular philosophical, sociological and economic traditions, is irresistible, as too is the exploration of the historical conjuncture which brought this way of thinking, dormant for many years, into the centre of the stage simultaneously in political philosophy, economics and biology.

For those concerned to counter the ideology of the new right, exposing the roots of its human nature theories and cutting away the apparently solid biological grounding in which they are embedded is part of an important political struggle, not because if we show that the new right is in error, it will *thereby* collapse, but because the ideological arena is one part, and an important part of, the terrain of struggle.

But perhaps most importantly, for those of us whose overriding concern is the building of a new world in which humans can live harmoniously with their own natures, with other people and with the biological and natural world around us, we must draw conclusions from the collapse of both the traditional left visions of human nature and the social constructionism which briefly succeeded it. The feminist project, perhaps because it is harder for women either to deny or to overstress their own biology, perhaps because of the nature of the reproductive labour which the social division of labour allocates to women, is likely to provide us with the starting-point for such a new vision.

Together with its sister movement ecology, feminism offers an urgency of approach to the questions of how we should live in harmony with our own transcendent nature, a nature whose very biology provides the possibility of freedom.

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The Black prole and Whitespeak: Black English from an Orwellian perspective

In his epic novel, *1984*, George Orwell paints a picture of a society dominated by social pressure to conform; a society intolerant of diversity of action, appearance or even thought. His 'brave new world' was an upside-down society where freedom was proclaimed but where only compliance was tolerated; a place described by Kalechofsky as having:

no laws; nothing is illegal. But everything that could make life tolerable is condemned by social pressure. Newspeak is the official language of Oceania. The Newspeak word that describes thinking in ... self-contradictory terms is 'double-think', ... 'a vast system of mental cheating', where 'the lie is always one step ahead of the truth.' Put simply, doublethink is the system where one says one thing and means another. The purpose of doublethink is to tamper with reality.¹

The calendar year 1984 has come and gone and while Europeans (whites) on their mother continent and their far-flung enclaves the world over congratulate each other on their escape from an Orwellian predicted society, Africans (Blacks) living in the Anglo-American territory known as the United States, know the truth of Orwell's pronouncements concerning a future underclass (the proles) in modern society:

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In reality very little was known about the proles. It was not necessary to know much. So long as they continued to work and breed, their other activities were without importance ... They were born, they grew up in gutters, they went to work at twelve, they passed through a brief blossoming period of beauty and sexual desire, they married at twenty, they were middle-aged at thirty, they died for the most part at sixty. Heavy physical work, films, football, beer, and, above all gambling filled up the horizon of their minds.²

It is comically frightening to read those words penned by an Englishman forty-odd years ago, and consider them in light of present-day America. Blacks are the proles of Orwell's nightmare and our civilisation has wrought a world where power exists for power's sake; where the status quo is unassailable; where one standard and only one standard is allowed to exist in behaviour, appearance, attitude and thought; and those not conforming are forced to live out their lives on the bottom of the social-economic heap. This paper is an investigation into American supra-culture's role in the development and perpetuation of a Black-prole sub-culture, especially through the manipulation of language and thought.

Black English

By and large, until the advent of the latest Black civil rights struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, scholars and laypersons alike were of the opinion that a definitive, rule-bound language, separate from standard white-American English, did not exist in the Black community. Both white and Black investigators saw the 'Black Dialect' from a deficit model of comparative analysis. Black language was seen as being 'impoverished'. Many scholars blamed Black speech patterns for poor academic performance,³ arguing that the poverty of the verbal system for communicating complex ideas was the reason Black children were unable to function effectively in the public school system.

These investigators saw the 'impoverished speech' of the majority of Blacks as no different from that of illiterate whites. When dialect workers of the 1940s were constructing the Linguistic Atlas of the United States, they concluded, without utilising any Black informants in the field, that:

By and large, Southern Negroes speak the language of the white man of his locality and of his education ... As far as the speech of uneducated Negroes is concerned, it differs little from that of the illiterate white; that is, it exhibits the same regional and local variation as that of the simple white folk.⁴

Many educators and psychologists, even now, still cling to the belief that Black English does not exist except in the form of an incomplete

version of middle-class speech, spoken only among poor Blacks. Behaviourists have attempted to prove this thesis by studying word habits with word association techniques. Standards of word association performance were based on white middle-class patterns (i.e., fat-thin). Any deviation from this standard (i.e., fat-skinny in Black English) was interpreted as a sign of linguistic underdevelopment, or low intellectual functioning. Based on this type of work with paired associative learning, Jensen (1968) was able to conclude:

language in the lower class is not as flexible a means of communication as in the middle class. It is not as readily adapted to the subtleties of the particular situations, but consists more of a relatively small repertoire of stereotyped phrases and expressions which are used rather loosely without much effort to achieve a subtle correspondence between perception and verbal expression.⁵

Since Black verbal associative patterns deviated most from the white middle-class norms, many researchers concluded that Black speech was merely an improvised code. They could not have been more wrong. Table 1 gives a list of fifty-four words signifying 'social-linguistic interaction' (talking) in Black English.⁶ Each word has a different and subtle connotation which very specifically defines the situational context.

Table 1: *Terms used to designate social-linguistic interaction*

1 Bad Mouth, Mouthin'	17 Group, Grouped	36 Scat Singin'
2 Base, Basin'	18 High Siding	37 Screamin'
3 Blow, Blow on	19 Hoorah, Horrahin'	38 Showboatin'
4 Call and Response	20 Jaw Jackin'	39 Shuckin' and Jivin'
5 Cappin'	21 Jeffin'	40 Signify, Signifyin'
6 Cop a Plea	22 Jivin'	41 Soundin'
7 Cop on	23 Jonin'	42 Splib Wibbin'
8 Cover snatch, Snatchin'	24 Larcen, Larcenin'	43 Stuff Playin'
9 Dozens, Dirty Dozens	25 Lolly Gaggin'	44 Sweet Mouthin'
10 Drop a Dime	26 Lug Droppin'	45 Talkin' Proper
11 Fat Lip	27 Mack, Mackin'	46 Talkin' Shit (Talking Trash)
12 Fat Mouth, Mouthin'	28 Mau Mau, Maung	47 Talkin' in Tongue
13 Frontin' Off	29 Mumblin'	48 Tautin'
14 Gate Mouth, Mouthin'	30 Pimp Talk	49 Testify-Testifyin'
15 Gibb, Gibbin' (Jibb)	31 Protection Talk	50 Toast, Toastin'
16 Gripp, Grippin'	32 Pull Coat	51 Tom Tom, Tommin'
	33 Rappin'	52 Whop, Whoppin' Game
	34 Rhapsodize	53 Wolfin', Wolfing
	35 Runnin' It Down	54 Woof (Wolf) Ticket

The educators and psychologists who assume a lack of language subtlety in the Black community can thus be proven wrong. The reason why the status-quo investigators made incorrect conclusions, based on incorrect assumptions, is that they ignored the cultural context of the behaviour under investigation. Spindler argues that cultures have to be understood from within, on their own terms, and by their own standards.⁷ How can one even appear to meet this requirement when only out-culture norms are used to analyse behaviour? The answer is that no attempt is made to know the Black sub-culture. Blacks are seen only in light of their adaptation and usefulness to the dominant culture. 'In reality very little was known about the proles. It was not necessary to know much. So long as they continued to work and breed, their other activities were without importance . . .'

Until recently, white scientists saw only deficits in out-cultures. As part of a culture that indoctrinated initiates to believe in the 'rightness' of its own behavioural patterns, members came to believe that behaviours not conforming to their ideal of the norm were 'abnormal' or 'sub-normal'. Jones, in reviewing how American scientists have reacted to racial differences on standardised IQ tests, remarks:

Those cases where the Black proved superior to whites [rote memory, making rhymes, naming words, and in time orientations] were plained away. It could not be otherwise. Despite the neutral position they attempted to assume, most of the scientists believed Blacks to be inferior to whites. Where their evidence appeared to contradict these beliefs, they sought to rationalize it away. For example, they argued that Blacks seemed to excel whites only in those tasks that did not really matter. Reuther, writing in 1917, summed up much of the belief of the social scientific community of the time when he said, 'Popular assumption of a difference in the mental capacity in the races seems to be borne out in part, at least, by the results of such psychological and educational studies as have been undertaken.' A neater statement of the relationship of beliefs of society and the conclusions of its scientists would be hard to find.⁸

Things are beginning to change in the society-as-a-whole, thanks to the efforts of Black activists. With the rise in Black awareness, a re-evaluation of Black-white differences in behaviour, including verbal communication, has begun from, first, an Afrocentric orientation within Black culture and, second, a more realistic appreciation of social adaptation by a small sector of the American scientific community at large.

New approaches

Besides the direct counter to the argument for lack of subtlety in Black English provided in Table 1, the false conclusions about Black speech

patterns have been challenged by three groups of linguistic scholars: creolists, sociolinguists and ethnographers.⁹

Creolists have been able to show a connection, via the Caribbean, between American Black English and West African linguistic styles.¹⁰ Many investigators, mostly Black, from the Black psychological perspective, have demonstrated many important African-based differences in Black English and its local white counterpart. One example is the copula deletions. Where a white speaker would say, 'she's gone' or 'he's going', a Black might say 'she gone' or 'he be going'. Another structural feature unique to Black English is the use of the durative *be* (e.g., he be going, everyday he be working, it be hot).

Sociolinguists have studied the language characteristics of urban Black populations. These investigators have described the different structure and form of Black English as being different in quality from standard English, but not inferior. They see, for example, the Black English negation forms (Didn't nobody get none) as different from the standard English forms of negation (Nobody got any) in kind, not degree. Black English viewed in this fashion becomes adaptive and is as complex as standard English, fitting the Black urban environment better than the middle-class English taught in the schools. The syntactic features of Black English are adaptive to the social context in which it is used: a present-focused, 'hard survival' landscape where the group is all important and the social-economic reality of oppression is ever present.

Ethnographers have enhanced this ecological viewpoint, focusing on verbal interaction patterns as they relate to the socio-cultural environment. Rather than focusing on the structure and rules of Black speech, these scientists have examined the use of Black English in its natural environment.¹¹ Their premise is that there are certain universal functions that language accomplishes, and that these universal functions are realised differently in different speech communities.

In describing Black language from the ethnographic approach, the goal is to specify those universal language functions as they are uniquely manifested in the Black cultural environment. Speech events and interaction patterns are the focus of investigation. Examples of material studied include 'preaching, shucking, marking, [and] the use of proverbs in the socialization of black children'.¹² Ethnographers are also concerned with such issues as how cultural norms shape the verbal interaction of Blacks, such as who speaks to whom, when, where, how, in what fashion, for what reasons, etc. Smitherman and McGinnis give the following example:

if a young Blood meets a friend and shifts from his normal greeting routine (Hey man, what's happenin?) to an overly formal form (Well, Mr. Jones, how do you do?), he may do so to mark humor, to maintain social distance or to convey a subtle put-down. It is not the new

greeting form per se which conveys the message, but the shift away from the regular routine. The interpretation of this kind of message requires knowledge of the rules of speaking in the sociocultural context of the black experience.¹³

These lines of research have strengthened the notion held by many Black psychologists that Black English is indeed a fully developed language. Black children are taught a form of verbal communication that is able to transfer all the higher forms of knowledge attributed to standard English. A quote from Bailey sums up this viewpoint: 'I propose that [the Black child] is verbal, that he has a language fully developed to serve the needs of his "world" and that he thinks, and thinks effectively enough to assure his survival in a not altogether friendly world.'¹⁴

Empirical studies have shown that, even though standardised intelligence tests and academic tasks seem to suggest a white verbal superiority over Black children of the same age, in reality 'Black children are ... linguistically competent even though their competence may be ignored'.¹⁵ Baratz has found that the form (Black English vs. standard English) affects the performance of both Black and white children on sentence repetition tasks. When the sentence is presented in standard English, white children outperform Black children, but when sentences containing the same meaning are presented in Black English, the Black children perform at a level *significantly* superior to that of the white children.

In the discussion of her findings, Baratz states:

The fact that the standard and nonstandard speakers exhibited similar behaviors when confronted with sentences that were outside their primary code indicates quite clearly that the 'language deficiency' that has been attributed to the children of low-income Negroes is not a language deficit so much as a difficulty in code switching when the second code (standard English) is not as well learned as the first (nonstandard English).

... The assumption that Negro lower-class children are learning a well-ordered but different system from their White counterparts, and that if this system, rather than standard English, is used as a criterion of 'correctness' that the White child will do more poorly than the Negro [i.e., appear deficient], was supported.¹⁶

Hall and Freedle have replicated the work of Baratz and also found that Black children learn at a significantly faster rate when lessons are presented in their native mode of communication.¹⁷ When the first language of usage was employed for teaching Black and white groups, Black children were found to do as well on verbal comprehension and production tasks as white children.

It now appears that the evidence for a separate Black language in America exists, that this language is capable of subtle distinctions, that one is able to think as abstractly in this language as in standard English, and that this Black communication system is *more* adaptive in the Black socio-cultural environment from which it evolved than is the standard language of the nation.

The Black mind

There is an old French saying that goes something like this: 'If you can teach them to speak French they will think French.' This was the code during the height of the French colonial period. In 1984, Orwell describes a world where 'thought-crime' is the worst offence against the state. People are required to learn and speak only the new official language of Newspeak, 'which is rapidly making the old language obsolete. With the destruction of the old language goes the destruction of the past, and the humanistic emotional world. When the past is destroyed, the power of man to pass moral judgment on his situation will be destroyed.'¹⁸

Today, Big Brother wants the language of Blackness destroyed, along with the aliveness and realness of this form of communication. Those in power want the truth to die and the lie to live. It is easier to have a few Black-proles accept the lie of equality than change racist society. Those in power know the truth of the lie of equality of opportunity. They know that society needs a perpetually impoverished underclass that can be exploited and which will man the galleys of this oppressive civilisation. But this knowledge is suppressed and a lie enthroned – Blacks are poor and ignorant by their own choosing or by decree of nature. The behaviour of the underclass is seen as the cause of their suffering; they don't act properly, they don't talk properly; they don't *think* properly for improvement – they are inferior.

The lie is so pervasive, so often repeated that it becomes truth in the Hitlerian sense. Even many of the Black 'leaders' today subscribe to a belief in the 'inferiority' of the Black dialect. Ora Curry, a Black educator, is on record as saying:

Black English is Black Nonsense . . . At the workshop we took a position that would reaffirm the national NAACP viewpoint that Black English is not a valid concept. We put Black English in the same category as Chinese English – 'No tickee, no washee' and Indian English – 'How'. To accept Black English in the classroom is to accept slang and vulgarity. It is just an excuse for teachers not to teach.¹⁹

Like Julia in Orwell's novel, Ms Curry seems to have learned how to 'survive in this world . . . without too much damage to her psyche'.²⁰ But

for others, the price of acceptance is too great. To ignore the evidence that Black English is a vital language with its roots in West Africa; to negate one's past; to sell out all claim to any group future, just for the reward of acceptance today, is a high price indeed.

This is not a treatise on Black psychology – that task would fill volumes. But why is Black English attacked so viciously and ridiculed so mercilessly? Why was the speech of 'Amos and Andy'* so laughable? Why is ghetto talk seen as humorous on current television programmes such as 'Good Times'? When whites (or ignorant Blacks) humiliate or reject Black speech, they are really humiliating or rejecting the Black mind. Because the lie of 'personal responsibility'/'equal access to resources', combined with the deficit model of culture comparison, is accepted as truth, any other form of thought is threatening. An examination of Black verbal communication patterns will confirm this hypothesis.

White catalogues six recurring themes in the language, oral literature and expressive patterns of Black folk. He sees these themes as 'symbolising the affective, cognitive and cultural flavour of the Black psychological perspective'; they are (1) emotional vitality, (2) realness, (3) resilience, (4) interrelatedness, (5) the value of direct experience and (6) distrust and deception.²¹

Vitality, the first psychological theme in Black English, is defined by White as 'a sense of aliveness, animation, emotionality . . . and openness to feelings'. This vitality is expressed in the language, oral literature, song, folk poetry, dance (poetry of motion), body language and the expressive thought of Black people. White has the following to say on this subject:

the speaker is expected to make words come alive, to use ear-filling phrases that stir the imagination with heavy reliance on tonal rhymes, symbolism, figures of speech, and personification. The vitality expressed in Black language is life-affirming; despair, apathy, and downtroddenness are rejected. Feelings are not suppressed, but freely shared with others. The speaker, performer, preacher, or singer touches the collective experience base of the listeners by being honest and authentic, telling about life as it really is.²²

This brings us to the second theme of Black language: realness or 'tellin' it like it is'. Blacks know life as only those 'on the bottom' can know life. They know life is hard and that in order to survive you must face facts squarely and deal with them. Black children are not told 'fairy tales' about Snow White being saved by Prince Charming; they are taught how to 'make it' in a hostile world.

* Stereotyped comedy characters from a long-running TV series of the 1950s.

Black poetry, the blues and gospel songs and other forms of verbal expression, such as rap, plainly display the hardship and pain of life, the sorrow of loss and non-attainment, the cost of the struggle. The Black child is expected to see the truth early and make peace with it. Psychological growth and emotional maturity come with paying one's dues: the ability to overcome hardship, defeat, sorrow and grief. The Black oral tradition accomplishes this job for the Black child.

The third psycho-linguistic theme in Black English is 'resilience and revitalisation'. Children of colour not only learn that life is hard, they learn that the 'hardship makes for strength'. Just as the steel is tempered by the fire, the spirit is re-vitalised in the experience of life's sorrows, sufferings, mistreatments, slights, neglects, rejections, discriminations, incriminations, misuses and abuses.

White captures the essence of this revitalisation process when he states:

The consciousness of pain, sorrow, and hurt in blues and gospel music is not accompanied by feelings of guilt, shame, and self-rejection. It is pure sadness that can be differentiated from the clinical syndrome of depression where guilt, shame, and anger transformed into self-depreciation work against the serenity of sadness. The openness to a balanced spectrum of human emotions in Black consciousness unencumbered by guilt, shame, and self-debasement makes it easier to draw upon the revitalization powers of sensuousness, joy, and laughter.

Those who erroneously label gospel music as sorrow songs miss the transcendent theme of dark clouds passing, of being bound for higher ground and the joy of being touched by the spirit. The ability to stay in touch with the energizing process generated by the uplifting experiences of feeling good, sensuality, and joy have enabled Black folks to revitalize, keep the faith, keep on keepin' on, and keep on climbin'.²³

'Interdependence, interrelatedness, connectedness, and synthesis' describes the fourth theme in the Black oral tradition. Unlike in the West, Southern (African) civilisation was and is based on the oral transmission of knowledge. The history and life of the people is captured in the language. When learning to speak, the Black child becomes aware of the interconnectedness of himself and the teacher; the speaker and the listener become one in the oral exchange. 'The listener acts as an echo chamber, repeating, cosigning, validating, and affirming the message of the speaker with amens, right-ons, yes sirs, teach-ons, and you ain't never lieds.'²⁴

Dr Martin Luther King could move an audience to tears or heights of joy through the use of rhythms, tonal fluctuations and picturesque imagery common to all the listeners. The richness of the metaphorical

usage in Black English is possible because of the commonality of experience in the Black population. The metaphoric expressions are loaded with multiple meanings and touch the psyche on many levels.

The fifth theme pervading Black English is the evident value of direct experience. Phrases such as ‘you cannot lie to life’, ‘the truth will out’, ‘hard head makes a soft behind’ and ‘what goes around, comes around’ are manifestations of the need to know life by experiencing it. A look at Black poetry, prose and, especially, verbal styles will confirm this assessment. Those who have never lived life nor ‘paid their dues’ are not held in high regard in the Black community. It is not that the experiences of past generations are ignored or discounted, because the past is important, but each generation must redefine the wisdom of the past through re-testing in their present social situation. Unlike the white world-view, which often describes social reality in ultimate terms, the Black psychological perspective acknowledges the constant change in all phenomena.

Even the personality of the individual is seen as dynamic, ever changing. In order to grow and develop, direct experience with life is required. The elderly are respected and their wisdom sought by the young. Their wisdom is a wisdom of experience – they have ‘paid their dues’ and ‘been down the line’. Elders provide counsel, connecting the young to generations of Blacks ‘passed over’.

The changing winds of time often determine the direction that growth will take on this point or another, but the big picture of life is slow in turning and therefore the wisdom of the elders forms a blueprint for present experience. That knowledge that still works is reaffirmed in each generation where it proves profitable. Those behaviours that must be modified, because of changing sociopolitical conditions, are modified and the new knowledge passed on to the next generation.

The sixth theme of Black English centres on a distrust and deception of the white. The language and mental makeup of Blacks has developed in a hostile environment. The landscape of black life in America is strewn with dangerous, life-threatening and mind-threatening hazards. The experiences with slavery, Jim Crow, racism, lynchings and other violence, de facto segregation, economic and political oppression and ignorance have taught Blacks to distrust whites.

The laws of the white world work only for its benefit; that world-view is based on the domination of nature, other peoples and races; and individualism. Black language reflects the psychology of Blacks in respect to the above beliefs. Blacks often speak about ‘the Man’ (the white culture) in very derogatory terms – they have seen and experienced a side of the collective personality of the white very seldom acknowledged by the white. Black language and rap often revolve around the ‘biggest liar, thief, hypocrite, or gangster in the world’ – the white Man.²⁵

Because of the danger of directly attacking, even verbally, The Man,

Black English often hides the real meaning of oral communication in culturally specific semantics. Whites often hear and understand one meaning when overhearing Blacks, while the 'true' meaning is buried at a deeper level, only accessible to the Blacks involved in the exchange. This use of language as a code to conceal the true transmission from the white person began with the first contact between the two races and strengthened during the long period of slavery. Familiar gospel songs sung by the toiling slaves, such as 'Steal away to Jesus', and 'Dis train is bound for glory', carried a message of preparation to escape and the existence of the underground railroad. The plantation masters only thought that the darkies were being religious and happy.

Today, as always, the use of deception by Blacks at an early age is a reality and a necessity. White gives the following two examples of how Blacks often use deception as a psychological defence against the oppression of the white educational system:

Linguistic deception can be used as a way of controlling undesirable psychological imagery and devaluative labels propagated by Euro-Americans. A bad nigger in white folklore is someone who is undesirable. In the culture semantics of Black folks a bad nigger is a hero, someone who is looked up to for not being afraid to take the risk of standing up to white folks. Black children sometimes confuse their teachers by turning undesirable labels around to indicate admirable personality traits. Teachers apply terms like 'clumsy lips', suggesting speech deficits, to children who persistently use Black English in the classroom. When the children refer to somebody as having clumsy lips, they mean a brother who can 'run it down, talk that talk, and get over' with the power of words . . .²⁶

Black English can, therefore, be seen as providing an organisation for the Black mind to communicate its unique cultural ideas. The collective experience and reasoning of the people is fulfilled in the unique linguistic patterns of the language. Black English is more than a form of standard English used by an illiterate people. Black English is the Afro-centric manifestation of a world-view qualitatively different from that of the Euro-American psychological perspective. Black English is the ecologically perfect organ for the transmission of that world-view, it allows the vitality needed for functioning in the Black mode.

America can only tolerate one type of mental activity: the type that accepts the status quo as truth, the type that has one reality seen by all. America, like Orwell's Oceania, needs a populace that agrees with the aims of the state and, therefore, the language of the state is very important in reducing conflicting opinions or thoughts. As in Oceania, 'the language reflects governmental aspirations, not individual reality'.²⁷

Blacks are a very important source of cheap labour and, therefore, economic growth in this society — they are the perpetual underclass on

which the wealth of this nation is dependent. These proles man and woman the factories, dispose of the wastes, fight the wars and secure the land for those at the top. They are important commodities to be valued and protected. The most dangerous threat to the order of society is independent thought on the part of the Black-proles, especially now that the repressive system of segregation has been somewhat dismantled.

Now that Blacks are not relegated by law to the demanding tasks of the proles, they must be made to believe that they can only function in those tasks. They must swallow the big lie of their innate inferiority, of their genetic inability to create their own destiny.

It is not the body of the Black that white society fears – no, the society needs a strong black back. It is the *mind* of the Black that is so troubling. Orwell has two characters in his novel that discuss this point: ‘When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your own free will. We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us; so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him ...’²⁸

In 1984, the hero Winston is eventually arrested, tortured and executed. But before his execution for ‘thoughtcrime’, he is ‘converted’. He comes to think the party line before being despatched. The government and the society require that he accept his crime of thinking in a fashion other than ‘doublethink’.

Today, there rages a battle for the past, the culture, the minds and the very souls of Black folk. And one battlefield of this struggle is the linguistic field of communication. The Black mode of conceptualising the universe is being dismantled through the destruction of Blacks’ native form of communication – Black English.

As Blacks begin to speak the Whitespeak of the oppressor, so do they begin to emulate the behaviour, even mental, of the white. Just as the government of Oceania did not destroy the heretic because of his resistance, but worked on converting him, the American government is hard at work converting those Black leaders able to lead a transformation of the Black role in this society. For some, the struggle has ended in suburbia or in middle-management; some are now more equal than others, believing in the lie of ‘equal access’ and spouting the ‘virtues’ of this society in fluent ‘Whitespeak’. Black teachers who have ‘made it’ begin to reject their past and stigmatise the Black child who lives that past; they reject the Black dialect in the same fashion as their white counterpart.

Rappaport understands how this subtle rejection can sting: ‘Because the language of a “divergent speaker” is just as functional and grammatical in its own terms as standard dialect, and a vital link between the person and those close to him, when the teacher “corrects” it, he contradicts the child’s experience.’²⁹ The child’s only defence is to withdraw and fall silent, or she can accept the speech patterns of the teacher and

reject her own culture and those in her early childhood who 'taught' her the folk language and thought patterns of the people. In either case she loses. In the former, she hides from the other class members and does not learn at a rate equal to her potential. In the latter, she loses as much as she gains, both in knowledge and ability to help future generations of her people.

The perpetuation of the order demands a large pool of willing hands and mighty backs to pull the ship of state. The Blacks are the group designated to contribute most heavily to the prole class, but their independence of thought makes them dangerous – in that they may discern the lie and rebel. And with the loss of the proles, the present order will die.

The birds sang, the proles sang, the Party did not sing. All round the world, in London and New York ... in the bazaars of China and Japan – everywhere stood the same solid unconquerable figure, made monstrous by work and childbearing, toiling from birth to death and still singing. Out of those mighty loins a race of conscious beings must one day come. You were the dead; theirs was the future.³⁰

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Bhopal: beyond genocide

A film that exposes the criminal responsibility of **Union Carbide Corporation** in the massacre of **Bhopal**. It documents the year-long agonising search by the victims of methyl-isocyanate for a cure and raises the larger issues thrown up by the movement in **Bhopal** – the right to a choice of a technology in the third world.

Duration: 79 minutes. English. 16mm colour.

Producer: **Cinemart**, New Delhi, India in collaboration with Citizen's Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation, Bhopal, India.

UK Distributor: **The Other Cinema**, 79 Wardour Street, London W1V 3TH. Tel: (01) 734 8508/9

Scenario of the 7 percent

Scenario of the 7 percent is a report on the conditions of the 52.3 million **Adivasis** who form 7 percent of India's population.

The destruction of the social life of the traditional tribal communities (a process begun over 150 years ago) has relegated the tribes to the unorganised and unskilled sectors of the proletariat. Perpetual tension characterises the relationship between the tribes and the plainsmen in India.

Vol: 224 pages *Price:* £21.00 (by sea mail)

Vol: 291 pages £30.00 (by air mail)

Publisher: Cinemart Foundation, Research & Documentation Centre, C 6/9 Safderjung Development Area, New Delhi 110016, India.

Notes and documents

UK commentary

September and October 1985 saw violent confrontations between young people and the police on the streets of Handsworth (Birmingham), Brixton and Tottenham (London). In Handsworth, two days of street fighting followed the arrest of a black man for an alleged motoring offence and the beating by police of a black woman who intervened. In Brixton, police shot and seriously wounded a black woman in her house, while searching for her son. In Tottenham, a black woman collapsed and died when police entered and searched her home. What ensued was described by the Metropolitan Police chief as ‘the worst rioting ever seen in mainland Britain’. ‘UK commentary’ analyses the context and significance of the ‘riots’ and examines the racism of the press reporting.

Britain’s Gulags*

Racism is as English as Shakespeare and as old as slavery – and the British police force is not only riddled with it but accepts it, tacitly, as a structured line of its macho culture. In a monetarist social order, such attributes are prime assets in enforcing the lines of demarcation between the haves and the have-nots and the never-will-haves. To have allowed a handful of blacks to enter into middle-class Britain through Scarmanite policies of ‘positive discrimination’ and urban aid says nothing to the youth trapped in the benighted inner cities – and

* First published in *New Socialist* (November 1985).

forgotten. To then make periodic law and order incursions into whatever life they have made for themselves comes across not as an attempt to ensure law and order for their own communities (the police are never there when blacks come under fascist attack) but as a muscle-flexing exercise on the part of the police on behalf of the society outside – recalling thereby their own condition and provoking a spontaneous uprising against it. A degenerate press then whips up racial (and now inter-‘ethnic’) bigotry, a repressive government sets afoot yet more authoritarian law enforcement, and the Labour Party draws even further back from the regenerative politics of socialism into Scarmanite policies of patch-up and make do. Handsworth is a classic example of the syndrome, Brixton and Tottenham its variants.

If the blacks who were deposited in the port-towns of Liverpool and Bristol and Cardiff were the result of slave and long-distance trade, those who were brought to shore up the heavy industries of the Midlands and the North and the service and light industries of the South in the post-war years signified an industrial era, albeit in decline. And as industry began to recede before the advance of technology, or simply died of the silicon age, it left once vital inner-city areas mired in poverty and decay, and peopled largely by a black under-class that had stemmed their decline for a while. But Thatcherism has accelerated that decline by knocking out even the meagre under-pinnings of the inner city with the policies of a thousand cuts and the politics of the stick.

Handsworth lost its foundry and engineering industries by the late 1960s, and by the end of the decade banks and businesses had moved out. The urban programme, instituted by Labour in 1968 and directed to largely white working-class communities (like Saltley), did not reach the black ghetto till after the White Paper of 1975 spelt out the anxieties of the state vis-à-vis disaffected black youth. And even then, such aid was directed not at building houses or schools or hospitals but at subsidising and buying up black self-help groups which had sustained emergency housing, supplementary schooling and legal assistance, and had in the process built up a militant black politics. Since then, the devastating cuts of the Tory government in housing (by 65 per cent since 1979 in terms of capital allocation to local authorities), in health and, through other cuts in grant aid, in local authority spending on schools and social and welfare services – compounded by the creation of unemployment (40 per cent of Handsworth is un-employed, and half its youth never-employed) – have eroded the infrastructure of the area. And to prop it up, Handsworth was granted £20m in urban aid which failed to ‘trickle down’ into the black community. To patch it up, Handsworth, like other inner-city areas, was provided with a rag-bag of voluntary organisations and Youth Training Schemes which, in reproducing racial discrimination within their own structures, have become self-defeating. And to keep it in place, Handsworth got a

community policing scheme (1979) in which the police played fairy god-mother and godfather, both at once – providing young blacks with a well-equipped and expensive youth centre and then coming down heavily on those who did not want to use it. The Lozells Project, as the youth suspected, turned out to be an information-gathering and keeping-tabs exercise.

A similar pattern of neglect and decay obtains in Brixton and Tottenham, though the decline in these areas – given over as they were to distributive trades and services rather than to heavy industry – was more gradual and prolonged, stretching back to the 1930s. But Tory cuts – and now rate-capping – have had an equally devastating effect on them. Brixton has the second largest number of sub-standard dwellings in the city, and ‘200-300 young blacks’ were discovered by Scarman in 1981 to be ‘homeless, sleeping rough or squatting’. Half the single-parent families in Lambeth were ‘non-white’ and ‘the two wards where the April disorders were centred . . . contain some 22% of all the single-parent households in Lambeth’. If Scarman were to extend his enquiries to Tottenham today, he would find that almost half of the Broadwater Farm estate consists of single-parent families and some 70 per cent of its residents are on one sort of benefit or another.

But to Scarman, convinced of the tangled pathology of the West Indian family, these are not indicators of poverty or of how racism structures such poverty as to make for black over-representation. And although he made some glancing remark that unemployment and social deprivation may be the cause of the ‘riots’, he failed to see that racism was also the cause of unemployment and social deprivation. He could not understand, that is, that racism is so institutionalised in British society as to defy solutions based on changing prejudiced attitudes and inter-personal behaviour. Hence, his recommendations did nothing more than put new gloss over old policies. A police-community liaison committee, for instance, had existed in Brixton long before Scarman, but had collapsed under the impact of heavy up-front policing which preceded Operation Swamp ’81. All that Scarman’s consultative committee served to do was to mask the change in police tactics from reactive policing to surveillance, intelligence-gathering and targeting – all of which accounts for the breaking and entering into the Groce and Jarrett homes. The consultative committee, like the liaison committee before it (and those elsewhere), has proved to be a one-way street – from the community or, rather, its state-sponsored ‘elders’ to the police – pretending to go some way towards police accountability, but leading to a dead-end of police arrogance and inflexibility. Or, where was the consultative committee between 7am when Mrs Groce was shot and 5pm when the first attack on Brixton police station was mounted?

It is that same arrogance that failed to acknowledge that, despite all the dereliction visited on them, the blacks on Broadwater Farm estate

had made a bearable life for themselves and the other residents – with a play group, a youth centre, and an old people's club (for blacks and whites) – which could not be lightly invaded. But as in the case of the Lozells Project, the police feel threatened if any black scheme in the ghetto is not controlled or approved by them. Broadwater Farm, like Handsworth or Brixton, has a history of such incursions, most notoriously in November 1982, when a riot squad occupied the estate for two whole days.

The distrust, if not hatred, of the police is common to both Afro-Caribbean and Asian youth of the inner city, except that the one is harassed and criminalised directly, while the other is left vulnerable to the harassment of the National Front before being criminalised for defending itself. The story of black struggles in the 1970s has almost always been the story of confrontations with the police – Notting Hill, Chapeltown, Cricklewood, Southall, Burngreave, the Oval, Liverpool 8 – and the names of police stations – Thornhill Road, Brixton, Moss Side, Hornsey, Stoke Newington – have passed into black legend as the castles keep of racist police. To allege in the light of this history that outside agitators caused the 'riots' is not to understand the deep animosity that the police have generated in the black community and the way that its members automatically defend each other when set upon by the police. The incident that set Handsworth afire according to the youth of the area was the brutal police treatment of an Afro-Caribbean woman who had gone to the aid of an Asian man, who was himself being harshly treated for a motoring offence.

The popular press, however, chose first to play down and then to ignore this sequence of events when the 'riots' proceeded to unfold a possible scenario of inter-ethnic conflict more to their liking. And so the looting and burning of shops qua shops became the looting and burning of *Asian* shops – and not by youth in general (Afro-Caribbean, Asian and white), but by Afro-Caribbean youth exclusively, who deliberately caused the death of the two Asians in the Lozells' post office. But little was made of the fact that a white youth was later charged with their murder. Nor in all the clamour about the death of a policeman, on duty, was there more than a whisper of protest from white press or politician to mourn the death of a black woman, in her home. And when a black politician did speak her name and give voice to the grief and rage of his constituents, not even the ranks of Labour could scarce forbear to damn him. Nor, again (over Handsworth), was any attention paid to the statements put out by the African/Caribbean Community of Handsworth and the local Asian Youth Movement asserting that 'the rebellion was not racially motivated' but 'directed against property and the police'. The *Asian Youth News* also pointed out that 'African youths ran from shop to shop getting the shop-keepers and their families out of the buildings and to safety; one Asian shop was

defended by the African youths because there were children in bed upstairs'. The paper also referred to a statement that the 'small shopkeepers of Lozells Road' had made to the effect that there was 'no enmity whatsoever between African and Asian'.

But even without these statements, it should have been clear to an unprejudiced or, at least, an enquiring press that these small Asian shops are to Handsworth what Barclays and Burtons are to Brixton. Ironically enough, it was they, when the banks and the businesses and the insurance companies fled the place, who stayed on to prop up Thatcher's ghetto economy. But at the point of 'riot' they, too, or rather, their meagre shops proclaim them as a class – not a race – apart.

Once again, the black communities' view of the press as liars and bigots who fit up stories to their preconceptions and then, pooling them, present a phalanx of opinion which passes for truth has been reinforced. (Very little, incidentally, was made of the fact that the police in Tottenham had let themselves into Mrs Jarrett's home with a key taken from her son's possessions when he was arrested for stealing his own car.) The press is also, for young blacks, the legitimating arm of the police, serving to stigmatise them as thieves and muggers and orchestrating public opinion on behalf of indefensible police actions – which, in turn, helps to further distance them (the police) from their accountability to the public, to the point indeed of putting the public itself 'on notice'!* The more genteel press is then seen to turn out the same views in more literate and crafted garb, but attacking this time not 'the people of the street' (Scarman) but the 'subversives' who speak up for them. The top people's paper finally finds a name for such subversion in 'marxism' and a habitation in 'the enemy within'.

What has occurred in Handsworth and Brixton and Tottenham are no more riots than the uprisings of the unemployed in London a century ago – only now it is the never-employed black under-class, interned in the workless gulags of Britain, who have taken up that tradition of protest. And what they, like the miners, point to is the combination of ideological, political and economic forces that Thatcherism in extremis has begun to mount against the people.

A. SIVANANDAN

* Immediately after Tottenham, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Kenneth Newman put all the people of London on notice that he would not hesitate to use CS gas and plastic bullets if circumstances warranted it.

Reporting the 'riots'

If the urban 'riots' of 1985 do prove to be the new 'Falklands factor' for the Thatcher government, the popular press will deserve most of the credit. Taking its cue from Tory politicians, the press has – with very few exceptions¹ – not simply downplayed the stark facts of inner-city distress, catastrophic levels of youth unemployment, police brutality and racism as contributory causes of the riots. It has gone further, and dismissed these material facts altogether as so much liberal hand-wringing naïveté: the sort of soft-minded coddling and special pleading which led to the breakdown of law and order in the first place.

With the slate thus wiped clean, the press has proceeded to inscribe causes more conducive to the spirit and strategies of Thatcherism: the criminality, greed, 'racism' and innate love of violence of the Afro-Caribbean community; drugs, 'softly softly' policing and the infectious example of rioting blacks in South Africa; the sinister hand of revolutionary conspiracy – directing black children in schools to hate the police and white society, summoning forth the 'mobile force of agitators' and all the other 'merchants of hate' to their work of destruction. But perhaps the most fundamental 'cause' of all dredged up by the right-wing press was the 'colossal blunder' which opened the door to 'massive immigration' without 'the people' being consulted, and has – ever since – prevented the problems connected with the black presence from being openly discussed and dealt with.² The time has come for some plain speaking: to give heart to 'white victims of racial humbug';³ to make 'decent' blacks wake up before they 'become the outcasts of our land';⁴ and to counsel a government which, according to one commentator, appears 'to have no ideas whatsoever' about how to deal with the crisis of the inner cities, beyond relying on an already overstretched police force.⁵

Most of the 'causes' of 1985 had been tentatively broached by the press in its coverage of the uprisings of 1981. The *Mail*, *Express* and *Telegraph* had all introduced then the 'outside agitator' theme after the first explosion in Brixton, and Paul Johnson in the *Sun* had warned of a co-ordinated campaign by the left to arouse hatred against the police.⁶ Three days later a leader in the *Star* detected a 'sinister', possibly revolutionary 'evil behind the violence', while Ronald Butt later belittled 'white racialism and unemployment' as causes of the urban upheavals, targeting anti-white indoctrination instead.⁷ The *Mail*'s Andrew Alexander rushed back from America where he saw the British riots on TV served up with the standard liberal 'cant', only to find the politicians and press in Britain indulging in much the same sort of fudge. According to Alexander, they seemed more interested in making 'excuses' for the rioters and in avoiding Powell's 'solution' of repatriation, than in a frank discussion of where Britain had gone wrong – by having allowed

‘the massive coloured immigration in the first place’.⁸

A measure of how far to the right the press has moved in the four years since Alexander accused it of not facing the ‘truth’ about Brixton is the fact that press coverage of the ‘riots’ of 1985 has received commendation from no less a publication than *Spearhead*, put out by the far right British National Party.⁹ Not even the likes of Andrew Alexander could, after Handsworth, Brixton, and Tottenham, accuse the press of ‘systematically playing down any troubles with a racial content’¹⁰ – on the contrary, Fleet Street has recently taken up these ‘troubles’ with a relish bordering on zeal. Like Enoch Powell, the press has (with very few exceptions) been blind to the riot-strewn centuries of national history, depicting the ‘riots’ as an immigrant-linked phenomenon, new to the 1980s.¹¹ For both press and Powell, inner cities with large black populations have become a ‘ticking time-bomb’,¹² not because they are economic wastelands, but because they are ‘alien’ and hence threatening: the foreign territory within.

If Powell set the tone for the apocalyptic terms in which the press has viewed the upheavals of 1985, the press has shown an inventiveness all its own in the use it has made of racial stereotypes, and the fusion of black unrest with the ‘revolutionary’ schemes of other cadres of the ‘enemies within’. The themes mentioned by right-wing columnists in 1981 had, by late 1985, become the tabloids’ truth, to be given higher sanction in the pages of *The Times* and *Telegraph*.

‘Racism’, Handsworth-style

After Handsworth, the press took readers on a tour of enemy territory, providing them with a ‘know your blacks’ guide to the weird ways of Rastafarians, the intra-ethnic rivalries of the Asian community, the hatred of black for brown, the stark contrast between the intrinsic lawlessness, laziness and incapacity of the former, and the law-abiding industriousness of the latter. Only the *Guardian* made room for local testimony which emphasised that Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities in Handsworth were ‘united by poverty’ and the common experience of white racism and police harassment.¹³ The daily press generally was more interested in the supposed ‘imported’ hostilities and jealousies which riddled the ‘immigrant community’. When ‘racism’ was mentioned at all as a contributory cause of the ‘riots’, it was the ‘racism’ of ‘bitter blacks’ who ‘hate the Asians’.¹⁴ Handsworth was, accordingly, an ‘uprising against Asians’ by ‘wild, undisciplined’ West Indian youths, jealous of their economic success.¹⁵

Facts which didn’t fit this interpretation were conveniently overlooked – such as the fact that white and Asian youths also took to the streets of Handsworth, and white and Afro-Caribbean shops also got attacked, and that more whites than blacks were arrested on the day of the riot. The ‘eye-witness’ account of two Asian brothers in the sub-post

office allegedly proclaiming that they would stay put to protect the Queen's property, and then being beaten by a 'West Indian gang' of anywhere from ten to 100 youths (depending on which paper you read), crying for mercy, and finally being burned to death, was given sensational coverage by all the papers. But very few paid much attention to the subsequent pathologist report that the brothers had *not* been beaten, and to the arrest of a white youth in connection with their murder.

The 'black racists' get organised

Brixton, for the *Express*, was no Handsworth: 'the mood was simply black versus white'.¹⁶ Brixton was 'sheer, bloody, greedy crime', with black hooligans using the shooting of a black woman in her own home by a policeman as the pretext for plunder, and to vent their unreasoning hatred of white society. Within a few days of Brixton, the *Telegraph* was urging the government to take a closer look at the 'causes' of the riot:

The potential of the West Indians and to a lesser extent the Asian Indians as revolution-fodder, as a lever by which they can be used to overturn our society, has been obvious ever since they began to arrive in this country in large numbers.¹⁷

From Belfast to the Cape the 'techniques of revolutionary agitation' were the same — 'speechifying' and 'leafletting', followed by violence and intimidation. 'After decades of ignoring this obvious threat and hoping it will somehow go away, the authorities will now have to take it seriously . . . One thing is certain: it is going to get worse.'

Within a few days, the Tottenham 'riot' made this prediction seem fully justified. Papers which had previously brought in roaming agitators as an ideological sideshow now moved them to centre stage. 'Racist blacks' were portrayed both as the pawns of mobile revolutionaries (their cannon-fodder) and as the elite troops of subversion who organised themselves on military lines, with an IRA-style ambush at Broadwater Farm. All of the right's demons came together at Tottenham — the Moscow- and Libya-trained hit squads ('some have been lying low under the umbrella of outwardly innocent racial pressure groups in London'¹⁸), the 'Trotskyites, Socialist extremists, Revolutionary communists, Marxist and black militants',¹⁹ the 'Red butchers',²⁰ self-proclaimed anti-racists ('in reality a mixture of believers in race war and class war' who are 'only interested in suppressing the truth and the right to free speech'²¹), and the left-wing council-based indoctrinators, who issued 'the rallying call for the murderous mayhem of Tottenham'.²²

The febrile, at times almost hallucinatory quality of the press pursuit of the bogies of the left relates not to the strength of the hard evidence (notable by its absence) but to the intensity of ideological purpose — to

exonerate government policies and the police from any responsibility for the social unrest, and to drive a wedge between Asian and Afro-Caribbean, between the essentially tolerant British people who 'are not, and never have been, racist' (and who don't riot) and 'the black racists' who 'are creating an appalling danger for Britain',²³ between the law-abiding citizens who love their country and the 'class warriors' seeking to destabilise it.²⁴

NANCY MURRAY

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- 2 H. Tracy, *Daily Telegraph* (19 October 1985).
- 3 Lynda Lee-Potter, *Daily Mail* (9 October 1985).
- 4 Leader, *Sun* (30 September 1985).
- 5 S. Glover, *Daily Telegraph* (30 September 1985).
- 6 *Sun* (20 April 1981).
- 7 *The Times* (10 July 1981).
- 8 *Daily Mail* (12 May 1981).
- 9 'In a study of the newspaper reports and comments in the following days the distinct impression was given that many of those journalists who for years had either actively or passively collaborated in the alien occupation of Britain . . . were finally biting their pens, and albeit most grudgingly, giving a hint of the first glimmerings of their acknowledgement of the moment of truth.' *Spearhead* (November 1985).
- 10 A. Alexander, *Daily Mail* (12 May 1981).
- 11 The press has also overlooked the existence of anti-black riots, such as the Notting Hill riots of 1958. See, for example, *Sun* leader of 24 October 1985: 'Since the war there has been a dramatic explosion in the influx of West Indian and Asian migrants. Despite the obvious strain placed on housing, schools and hospitals and the competition for jobs, there have been no white riots, few protests.'
- 12 *Sun* (11 September 1985).
- 13 See David Rose, 'West Indians and Asians deny rivalry', *Guardian* (12 September 1985); Leslie Anthony Goffe, 'Black and brown in Brum', *Guardian* (19 September 1985).
- 14 Roy Kerridge, *Sun* (12 September 1985).
- 15 Racial stereotypes have been deployed to represent the Asians as 'natural victims' whose cultural exclusiveness provokes retaliation. In certain right-wing journals there has also been a tendency to portray the Asians as the new Jews, whose allegiance lies elsewhere, and who take — but never give. See, for example, Rowlinson Carter, 'Can't they be like us?', *Spectator* (21 September 1985): 'The Asian remains alien because he is never in the pub, not even for a mango juice, and his shop acts as a one-way valve, the money pouring in an unbroken stream to its safe place beneath the mattress, never to be seen again.'
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Notes on the Kurdish struggle

For over half a century, a struggle for nationhood and independence has been carried on, by armed uprising and diplomatic negotiation, among a people who are estimated to number some twenty million, but whose very existence is routinely denied by one or other of the occupying powers. Subjected in recent years to mass, forced removals, to indiscriminate killing and to the paraphernalia of modern chemical warfare, theirs is a struggle that has been almost completely ignored.

The Kurds are one of the ancient peoples of the Middle East, with a history stretching back some 4,000 years. Their modern history, however, can be traced back to the early part of the present century when, in the aftermath of the 1914-18 war, and following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France divided up the Middle East between themselves. For although the Treaty of Sèvres, made between the Allied Powers and the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman Empire) two years after the war’s end, envisaged the creation of a Kurdish state, its terms were never carried out. France’s annexation of the Kurdish provinces of Jezireh and Kurd Dagh under its Syrian mandate (1921), the annexation of Kurdistan by the newly formed state of Turkey in 1923 (with the consent of the Allied powers) and the British annexation of Southern Kurdistan under its Iraqi mandate (ratified by the League of Nations in 1925) engendered a division of Kurdistan which persists to this day. It is now split between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Covering an area roughly the size of France, Kurdistan is rich in coal, oils, gas and minerals, and possesses fertile soil. Three-quarters of its people are settled farmers. That it is completely landlocked has been, and is, a major obstacle to the liberation movement.

The failure to set up an independent Kurdish state has led to continuous revolts and uprisings: Sheikh Mahmud in Southern Kurdistan (1919-20 and again in 1923); Simko in Western Kurdistan (1920-30); Sheikh Sa’id in Northern Kurdistan (1925); Khoybon-Ararat in Northern and Western Kurdistan (1930-32); Sheikh Mahmud (1931) and Barzani in Southern Kurdistan (1933); Dersim in Northern Kurdistan (1936-8) and Barzani in Southern Kurdistan (1943-5); Mahabad in Western Kurdistan (1946-7); the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq (1961-75) and in Iran (1967-8). And they continue today in Iraq (dating from 1976) and in Iran (dating from 1979).

These were (and the last two still are) armed liberation movements, demonstrating that the Kurds remain a continuous political and military force and factor in the Middle East. Indeed, their struggle has often been used as a bargaining counter in the intricacies of Middle East 'diplomacy'. The Algiers Agreement* of 1975, made between Iran and Iraq, but largely engineered by Kissinger and Sadat, had as one of its main objects the destruction of the Kurdish liberation movement in Iraqi Kurdistan. As the Pike report on the CIA makes clear, when it suited US foreign policy to put pressure on the Iraqi regime, the Kurds were given support, but when it was considered expedient to build up Iraq as a counterbalance to Syria, the 3 million Kurdish population trapped in Iraq and the 200,000 refugees in Iran were summarily abandoned.¹ Iran, which had hitherto given logistical support to the Iraqi Kurds, abruptly ended its help.

The Algiers Agreement was one of a number of regional alliances developed between the occupying powers which aimed, among other things, at suppressing the Kurdish 'threat'. The first was the Sa'adabad Pact (July 1937), in which Iran, Turkey and Iraq agreed to work together against 'the formation and activity of associations, organisations or armed bands seeking to overthrow established institutions' – in other words, to curb the Kurdish movement. Similarly, the Baghdad Pact of 1955 between Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, together with Great Britain, against the regional spread of communism, was used also against the Kurds. Again, in 1963 Syria sent an expeditionary force to assist Iraq against the Kurdish armed movement. And only the diplomatic intervention of the USSR prevented Turkey, Iran and Syria from launching a joint military action ('Operation Tiger') at the time to help Iraq finish the Kurdish movement once and for all.² Even Israel was brought into the consultations on this plan: 'Moshe Goren, Israeli Deputy Chief of General Staff had made a trip to Iran to give "advice" on how best to operate against the Kurds.'³

Some four years after the Algiers Agreement, in 1979, Nato Turkey and Ba'ath Socialist Iraq also signed an agreement, to cooperate against Kurdish 'separatist' activity in both countries.⁴ Turkey subsequently extended its proclamation of martial law (December 1978) to cover nineteen provinces, of which sixteen were Kurdish. And in May 1983 Turkey launched a major operation inside Iraqi Kurdistan – Turkish officials later admitted that Turkey and Iraq had agreed to cooperate against Kurdish movements along the joint border.⁵ Indeed, as part of their Nato training, Turkish soldiers carried out a manoeuvre (code-named 'Kanatli J 78') for which the scenario is that of wiping out the Kurdish population of Hakari (an area of Kurdistan in Turkey adjoining the

* Publicly torn up by Saddam Hussein at the start of the Iran/Iraq war.

border with Iraq and Iran). Half of the Nato Turkey soldiers were dressed as traditional Kurdish tribesmen, while other units carried out the 'extermination'.⁶

Deportations: aftermath of the Algiers Agreement

But Turkey is not alone in the racism it practises against the Kurds. It has long been part of the right-wing Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party's strategy to arabise the minorities living in established Arab states. According to Michel Aflaq, founder of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party and later philosopher of its right wing, 'Kurds are Arab Muslim citizens, like any other Muslim Arabs, there is no difference between them.'⁷ If they refuse to be deemed such, then 'imperialism is behind this contradiction'.

Back in the 1960s another right-wing Ba'ath ideologist and Syrian government minister, Mohamed Talab Hilal, argued that the Kurds were not Arabs but remnants of a savage, outdated origin, not worthy to be 'treated in a human way'. He proposed that Syria deport its entire Kurdish population – their lands were more fertile – and that the Kurdish people be deprived of any sort of education at all.⁸ (Hilal remained in his cabinet post till the left-wing Ba'ath took over in Syria, and reportedly is still in prison there.)

Sa'id Hemo is another name on the long list of Ba'ath racists. As a commander of the Iraqi army in Kurdistan in the 1960s, he ordered his soldiers: 'Slaughter them, eradicate the names Kurdistan and Kurds and destroy everything Kurdish or belonging to Kurds. Kill even the mountain animals.'⁹ Over ten years later, when the Kurdish movement in Iraqi Kurdistan collapsed, following the Algiers Agreement between Iraq and Iran and Iran's withdrawal of all support to the Iraqi Kurds, Hemo's words bore fruit. Iraq undertook a massive deportation scheme of the Kurdish population – previously not possible because of the liberated areas under Kurdish control. '300,000 Kurds have been forcibly transferred southwards to desert regions' was the assessment of the Minority Rights Group Report.¹⁰ Saddam Hussein, then Iraqi vice-president, was quoted in the press as having stated that the regime had 'changed the residence of people in some border villages ... and transferred some people to other parts of Iraq ... People have also been resettled in the Southern and central areas of Iraq.'¹¹

In less than three years, 616,600 Kurds have been deported to strategic hamlets prepared by the regime for the purpose. The regime created a 'strategic border belt' (15-25 kilometres wide by 800 kilometres) along the borders with Iran, Turkey and Syria. This entire area was emptied of any human life – it came to be known as the 'Strip of Death'. 1,247 villages were burned, levelled and razed to the ground by the Iraqi army. One in every six Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan has been affected by this atrocity. Not only was the population of the 'Strip of Death' affected,

but entire districts from Kurkuk, Shekhan, Sinjar and Khanaqin as well.¹² And in 1980 a further 50,000 Fails Kurds, who lived in Central Iraq, were expelled to Iran, to join the 40,000 who had been expelled earlier, in September 1971.¹³

One American author described it thus: 'Trees, houses, crops, all have been burned to the ground. The greenest, lushest part of Kurdistan lies within the borders of Iraq, but the mountain springs have been stopped up with cement and chemical defoliant poured on the natural vegetation.'¹⁴

Arabisation went hand in hand with the deportation. Bribing Arab tribes with fertile lands and funds, the Iraqi Ba'ath regime encouraged them to resettle in Kurdistan. The equivalent of £750 has been offered to any male Arab who marries a Kurdish girl. And when many Arab tribes refused to be resettled in Kurdistan, saying it was *Mal Heram* (forbidden by Islam), the regime declared its willingness to the Moroccan government to give agricultural land, houses and other facilities to would-be Arab Moroccan settlers.¹⁵ Between 1977 and 1978 about 50,000 Egyptian peasants were imported by Iraq into Kurdistan – it was planned to transfer a total of one million Egyptians. The Ba'ath were determined to increase the population of future generations of Arabs in Iraq and alter the ethnic balance, and it was only continued Kurdish resistance that partially halted the scheme. Several thousand people were deported from the Barzan area, and 8,000 men taken as forced labour – nobody knows where.¹⁶ And in the first three months of 1985, the Iraqi army destroyed over forty villages, the total population of which approached 20,000. The regime pretends to do all this for the sake of the Kurds, to resettle them in 'modern villages where civilisation is' for the purpose of creating a 'socialist flourishing country' and by 'removing this citizen to developed and civilised places ... the new journey of life has begun ...'¹⁷

But these 'modern', developed and 'civilised' places are, in fact, camps near Basra, Nasaria and Diwaniya which 'no-one is allowed to leave without permission. If we wanted to get something, we asked for police permission.' That was in the South of Iraq and the 'modern villages' which have been built inside Iraqi Kurdistan and resettled by deportees from the 'Strip of Death' and other areas are 'houses built of cement blocks ... Our village houses were palaces compared to these snake-poison-like boxes.'¹⁸

One spiritual Jezidi Sheikh died shortly after telling his family members that he would do so out of outrage in that evil place. When the Sheikh's son was asked about it, he said with tears in his eyes: 'We were living in our village among our fruit orchards. When there was a wedding all men and women danced for days and nights and when we died we made a ceremony. Now, we celebrate nothing and we don't work. We are spoiled people by now. I swear by this sun in this midday, I wish I die.'¹⁹

The forced deportation has had disastrous consequences – not only economic and political, but social, cultural and psychological. Agriculture, for example, has been catastrophically affected. For the deportees have not only been forced to leave agricultural land that was formerly worked actively, but they remain unproductive in the strategic hamlets they have been moved to. Second, the deportation breaks up the social structure – the community in Kurdistan is made up of tribe, clan and extended family. Transplanted by force into a new environment totally unlike their own, many have broken down, gone mad. Such a policy may well also lead to chauvinism and racial hostility between Kurds and Arabs.

The Kurdish people have never carried out attacks abroad on their oppressors. Unlike the Palestinians or Armenians, they still live in their own country, Kurdistan, and are able to carry on the struggle there. But continuous mass deportations can only render such attacks more possible in the future.

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Book reviews

The Nicaraguan reality

Nicaragua: revolution in the family

By SHIRLEY CHRISTIAN (New York, Random House, 1985). 337 pp. \$19.95.

The daily misreporting on Nicaragua over six years throughout the major media has now been recapitulated in a book. The author, Shirley Christian, might one day feel ashamed of herself, for she has done a disservice to journalism, has further poisoned already contaminated policy arguments and has contributed, knowingly or not, to the Reagan Administration's disinformation campaign against Nicaragua. Christian has produced a book that she could have ghostwritten for President Reagan.

These are serious charges, which, I believe, are called for because of the gravity of the situation in Central America. In Nicaragua, Sandinistas and US-backed *contras* are killing each other. Regional war could well break out, and, as House Speaker Thomas 'Tip' O'Neill predicts, US troops sent in. Christian is the *contras'* reporter. Their war is her cause.

You can't see the war from the streets of Managua. But the body bags some 10,000 since 1982 – keep coming back from the fronts. There are squatters all over Managua, refugees from the war, from the displacement caused by revolution. There are shortages of sundry commodities, some goods are rationed, difficulties with transportation abound, corruption has been discovered in various sectors: problems everywhere one looks. Solutions appear to be less abundant. The war superimposes itself on an underdeveloped society. In Nicaragua today, the legacy of the old stares you in the face: the new society struggles to emerge.

In some ways, material conditions may be worse than they were under the Somoza regime. Then again, Somoza did not have many social obligations in his budget, nor did the United States finance a war against him. Indeed, the United States never cut off trade with him. Somoza, with US backing, was the counterrevolution in power. Now, the revolutionaries hold the reins, and that basic fact has produced irreversible changes. In the streets, in the stores, in government offices, amidst the tension and excitement, people possess a quiet sense of security and dignity, one produced by the revolution. The revolution has committed itself to the notion of basic human rights, including the right to complain, without fear, about the government.

Unlike Somoza, the Sandinistas must explain their policies using reason and justice as the criteria. National dignity, pride and human rights are now assumed by the population. The government must be accessible and accountable. One walks around Managua without fearing arrest, or the consequences of direct critical speech.

You wouldn't know from Shirley Christian's description of life in modern day Nicaragua that *La Prensa* publishes every day and lashes out at the government in semi-hysterical prose. It puts on its front page stories that even the Reverend Sun Yung Moon's newspaper, the *Washington Times*, would be embarrassed to run.

Like all Third World revolutions, the Nicaraguan revolution dramatises its uniqueness; the Sandinista Party, the FSLN, while committed to its 'vanguard' role, maintains its apparently contradictory pledge to allow political pluralism. Parties do function, from billboard advertising to formal party congresses, but pluralism, to function, means integration of the diverse sectors of society in their work, organisations, schools and social life around the goal of sane national development – a difficult task.

The Sandinistas in the midst of war must also address a horrendous distribution of wealth and adhere to promises to build a more egalitarian society. At the same time, they must offer the propertied classes continued incentives to keep producing. Nicaragua is rife with contradictions, and the revolution has not been able to realise some of its goals largely because of the war supported by US policy. Christian, however, downplays the war and places all the blame for Nicaragua's plight on the Sandinistas' evil internal policies. She ignores the dynamics of revolution and of counterrevolution – which the United States forces into an armed struggle – and insists that the issue is simply good versus evil.

The unfortunate effect of this kind of contextually misleading reporting becomes even more pernicious when transferred into the policy arena. Reporters like Christian function in a psychological warfare context, which the Sandinistaphobes use to convert US opinion into an ever more hateful mind. Christian's thesis, like President Reagan's, is that

inside the 'family' one group of middle- and upper-class revolutionaries stole the revolution from another. According to her, the Sandinistas manipulated, lied and hustled for power from the outset and did little effective Somoza fighting 'from their comfortable spots in the suburban hills' of Costa Rica, while their good cousins, the honest, decent middle-class businessmen, made the big sacrifices, bore the brunt of the real combat and lost because they had the misfortune to believe in the Sandinistas' promises.

Christian belittles the role of the Sandinistas' National Liberation Front – the Sandinistas 'probably would have become a footnote to history had a moderate regime been able to assume power in Nicaragua before the end of 1978' – and downplays the horrors of the Somoza period. Indeed, according to Christian, Somoza was fashioning an agrarian reform, and, though authoritarian, he allowed his critics 'a relatively large amount of space to act in public life'. Compared to whom?

She does not understand that it was the *mistica sandinista* that inspired the *muchachos* of the barrios to display extraordinary courage and will in confronting trained guardsmen armed with tanks and armoured vehicles, with artillery and aircraft. And that Sandinista mountain veterans organised the battles for the cities and led the *muchachos*.

The reality of guerrilla war is meeting and defeating – by demoralising – the superior force of the enemy. Like Fidel Castro's guerrillas, the Sandinistas won their legitimacy by confronting the 'invincible' military power of the tyrant.

Christian draws a different, indeed a nasty picture. Her Sandinistas are manoeuvrers, petty power-seeking scoundrels who used other people, from Sandino through the late Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, to realise their one goal: power. And what united them was 'marxism-leninism', and when they split into factions in 1974 over tactical disputes, the archfiend of Caribbean marxism-leninism, Castro, forced them to unify.

Once in power, of course, they behaved like rats. They attacked the sacred church, ran afoul of the Miskitos, alienated 'pure people' (the market vendors) and destroyed private property, civil liberties and democracy. In Christian's Nicaraguan family, the bad cousins won, and the good cousins were forced by conscience to join the *contras*.

Christian shows no interest in the structural deformities of Nicaragua, no concern that its national sovereignty existed in name only, that the United States had established a de facto protectorate over the country since the 1890s. Christian's history is a vague preface barely connected to the all-important current tragedy. Ironically, in the seventeen pages devoted to 'the baggage of the past', her main source is a former Somoza lackey who participated in the dynasty's corruption.

She also assumes that US intervention somehow derives from natural law or is divinely ordained. 'In 1909 opponents of President Zelaya ...

revolt[ed, which] set off a new civil war and produced the first direct US military intervention.' In fact, according to the State Department, US Marines had invaded Nicaragua in 1894, 1896, and 1899 'to protect US property'. Christian never mentions that intervention violates international law. Nor does she address the causes of US interference in Nicaragua before the Sandinistas; rather, she assumes, like the Kissinger Commission, that intervention has been axiomatic, and not that important.

Christian sees only the present. The past to her is regrettable. The United States blew its opportunity to block the Sandinistas from taking power during the Carter years, and President Reagan has not posed the real issue for US policy: the internal repressive policies of the Sandinistas who have attacked their democratic opponents because they 'intended to establish a Leninist system from the day they marched into Managua'. In her desperation to influence policy-makers, Christian omits basic and well-known evidence. A 1985 Congressional Report discovered that forty-six out of forty-eight FDN military commanders (the major *contra* organisations) were former Somoza National Guard officials. She also neglects the *contras*' impressive record of authenticated human-rights atrocities.

The Nicaraguan revolution, like other Third World dramas, was and is a class struggle as well as an attempt to reconquer sovereignty and thereby control the course of the future. Sandinism is an ideology whose purpose is to allow Nicaraguans to re-enter the course of history, to recapture their heroic past and their current natural resources.

'It was not the masses', Christian declares, 'but the economic and political elites who made it possible for the Sandinistas to march triumphantly into Managua in July 1979. It was a revolution facilitated by the conservative and libertarian opponents of Somoza, by priests, by business competitors and landowners, and by people who had risen out of the urban poor.'

Finally, Christian dismisses class conflict even as a factor in history-making. 'The struggle over the political and economic structures of Nicaragua that followed the fall of Somoza was among these people, not between rich and poor.'

The Nicaraguan reality I have seen is exactly the opposite of Christian's. I watched from the outset a revolution whose leaders, like almost all revolutionaries, were deeply influenced by Marx, Lenin and Castro, and whose Nicaraguan nationalism was the dynamic factor. The *mística sandinista*, blended with profound cultural Catholicism, produced their unique ideology. Catholic priests and Sandinista militants who run government ministries and those who organise in the neighbourhoods agree that their revolution is an attempt to allow the poor to gain a rightful place in the modern world, a sense of dignity and a material base from which the spirit is enriched by plausible hopes and dreams.

At the same time, any romantic stardust should be immediately rubbed out of the observer's eyes. Nicaragua is not a socialist utopia, nor is it a viable model for other nations at this point – thanks in large part to Reagan's war. The Sandinista leaders are terribly human. They, like all revolutionaries, have made serious errors of judgement. And they have both admitted and paid for some of their mistakes. But look at intentions. What government in the history of the western hemisphere has devoted a significant percentage of its budget to the betterment of Indians? And what other government has offered real cultural autonomy to them, as the Sandinistas are now doing, despite their serious and irrevocable errors in that area?

To label this revolution marxist-leninist is convenient for Christian, but it obfuscates Nicaraguan reality – a poor, undereducated, structurally distorted Third World land. To name it 'totalitarian' is absurd. Its human rights record compares favourably to its neighbours and to most of the Third World. The revolutionaries, once embarked on their course of change, have had to face the Pavlovian counterrevolutionary response of the United States, which is now called 'low intensity warfare'. But what a high price Nicaragua has had to pay for this small US investment in violence.

Books like Christian's have become the propaganda part of this war. Her family darlings, the Robelos, Caleros and Cruzes, are not on the battlefield, and, should the *contras* somehow win through massive US intervention, they will still not have power – only the facade of it. The business part of Christian's family is and will be the cosmetic face for the ex-Somoza Guard that commands the guns. Christian's book is a kind of public relations job for this gang – and, of course, in the name of Nicaraguan democracy.

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Nicaragua

Four films for Channel 4, directed by MARC KARLIN (Lusia Films, 7-9 Earlham St., London WC2; 1985).

Those who were expecting or hoping for a longer, up-dated version of John Pilger's 1983 documentary on Nicaragua, *The threat of a good example*, will have been disappointed. Certainly, Pilger's film was excellent in its own terms, making available the basic information on Nicaragua to British viewers: the history of US aggressions throughout the century, the achievements of the revolution in health, education, housing, land reform, and so on. But *Nicaragua*, a series of four films

by Marc Karlin, shot in 1983-4 and shown by Channel 4 in October 1985, sets about a much more difficult task; it aims to allow the viewer to 'understand', not just learn the 'facts' about, Nicaragua. Karlin carefully avoids the conventional fiction created by the television documentary on the Third World, the illusion that the subject, whatever it may be, is readily accessible to a British audience, with its implicit notion that undeveloped equals less complex.

What has been happening in Nicaragua since the July 1979 overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship, is commonly referred to by Nicaraguans as *el proceso*, and Karlin refuses to make the process easier for the viewer. The edges are not smoothed off for us, the editing prevents us gliding smoothly from one piece of acquired knowledge to another. There is no triumphant crescendo unfolding to give us the illusion of having consumed a neatly packaged, linear summary of a country in the way we might a set text for an exam.

The first film stands as a warning: an hour of tracking shots of Susan Meiselas' still colour photographs of the 1977-9 insurrection with the soundtrack contemplating the photographer's role, 'messenger' or 'participant', and her relationship with Nicaragua. We are warned that we cannot simply impose our assumptions and concepts on Nicaragua without completely distorting the lived reality of the revolution. The structure of the films leads us on a discovery not unlike the effort which the Nicaraguans themselves are having to make to piece it all together; pieces of the jigsaw are faded or missing, they turn up in the wrong order and sometimes don't seem to fit.

Film two develops the theme further. Forty-five years of dictatorship denied Nicaragua a national identity by erasing its history. We are presented with a nationwide salvage operation. At one extreme, a group of peasants in an isolated village re-enact their local history since the turn of the century, while their colleagues watch with a poignant mixture of amusement and fascination. At the other is the Sandino Institute, whose painstakingly assembled collection of documents, photos and relics of the struggle against the old regime had to be packed off to the mountains in the wake of the invasion of Grenada, to prevent the second loss of history.

It is the second half of the series that deals with today's revolutionary Nicaragua – the viewer has already been given the context without which there are no tools to participate in the debates the films confront. Why did two-thirds of Nicaraguans vote for the FSLN in the November 1984 elections when it admitted freely that this would mean years of austerity and a David and Goliath fight against imperialism? How is life different for the workers and peasants and what are the terms of political struggle within pluralist Nicaragua? How do the people relate to the FSLN? What does 'a people determining its own destiny' mean?

The achievements and aggressions are all there in Nicaragua, waiting to be put on to celluloid, but Marc Karlin is determined to capture the struggle that lies behind them, the contradictions which arise with every problem that is solved. The richness of the series is best illustrated by just one example in film three which examines the FSLN daily, *Barricada*. One of the paper's innovations is the 'Buzon Popular', the popular postbox, where readers write to complain about issues ranging from discos that play their music too loud to authoritarian teachers and toilet paper shortages. The film follows two journalists who set off to investigate the case of a working-class woman who complained to the paper that her neighbourhood committee, the CDS, was holding back her rations of basic foodstuffs because she couldn't pay the 10 cordobas (the price of a beer) voluntary contribution towards the construction of the local school. The problem seems obvious – the CDS is abusing power to pressure members of the community.

The journalists arrive in a working-class *barrio* – a shanty we'd call it, except that it's clean and organised. The residents assemble around the visitors – accusation and counteraccusation, everyone's got their own explanation. Gradually the story becomes clearer, but not simpler. The role of the Ministry of Education, which has provided the building materials free, is put into question. The community had agreed to pay for the labour involved on the basis that the building would take two months, and it's taken five months already. The problem behind the woman's original complaint emerges: her lover has been denied rations in the *barrio* because he has a wife in another area and is included on the lists there. 'Lots of us have lovers or husbands who have wives or lovers living elsewhere', the women of the *barrio* nonchalantly explain. The journalists' report concluded that the community had to resolve the personal problems itself and denounced the Ministry for mismanagement.

Of course, the revolution cannot eliminate machismo, bureaucracy and personal animosities in just a few years. The next week's *barrio* assembly will probably resolve, in part at least, some of the problems and others will probably arise. But before long, they will have a brand new school – educational reform, local democracy, people's power at work. Behind the achievement of reducing illiteracy from over 50 per cent to less than 13 per cent lie hundreds of these stories of struggle and sacrifice.

The silence imposed by the constant fear of repression under Somoza is a recurring theme. We are made to realise that the right to complain, to analyse and to organise locally are essential for Nicaraguans to start solving their problems themselves, and help explain why they are prepared to defend their revolution, whatever the military odds and despite the increasing austerity which results from the US aggressions. They do feel in control. As a lay preacher put it, in film four, 'We

support this change – because it is ours.’

The films are not easy. The contemplative style and austere soundtrack are quite unfamiliar to the British television audience. We have to work, to draw our own conclusions. But *Nicaragua* repays the attention it demands; the four films together provide the kaleidoscope of powerful images and experiences of struggle which challenge any visitor to the region. It does have to be shown and seen in sequence and in its entirety and it is a shame that Channel 4 did not have more courage and put out the films on consecutive nights rather than weekly. The very fact that the films refuse to construct a deceptive illusion of coherence is precisely why they offer us a valuable aid to understanding the process of creating a democracy, what it really means to build a revolution. They deserve to be presented in the most appropriate format.

London

JOHN BEVAN

Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry

By KHALID A. SULAIMAN (London, Zed Press, 1984). 281pp.
£18.95 cloth, £6.95 paper.

Ghassan Kanafani was the first critic to apply the term ‘resistance’ to Palestinian poetry and literature in his 1966 study in Arabic, *The Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine 1948-1966*. In so doing, Kanafani called the attention of the Arab world to poetry being written by Palestinians inside Israel at a time when few Arabs were ready to acknowledge this cultural production. Kanafani’s study, which was followed by a second volume in 1968 and an anthology of this poetry between 1948 and 1967 presented by Yusuf al-Khatib, resulted in a burst of attention and acclaim, both critical and uncritical, with regard to Palestinian resistance poetry, an attention which was in fact facilitated by Israel’s occupation, following the June 1967 war, of the West Bank and Gaza. Mahmud Darwish responded to this ‘over-enthusiasm’, as Khalid Sulaiman points out in the conclusion to *Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry*, by ‘asking Arab writers and critics to show more objectivity when writing about this type of poetry, and not to allow affection to be the decisive criterion when assessing it. He also points out that Palestinian resistance poetry should not be looked upon as if it came suddenly from nothing.’

In presenting an investigation of Palestine and modern Arabic poetry, where the subject is not strictly speaking Palestinian poetry but the role played by the question of Palestine in the development of the larger corpus of modern Arabic poetry, Sulaiman is responding to the Palestinian poet’s request. The critic’s approach here is historical in emphasis. The poems, which are ordered chronologically, are further

presented as illustrative of the continuing political and intellectual history of the Palestine problem in the modern Arab Middle East.

The study begins in the late nineteenth century, with the emergence of Zionism as a political force in Europe and its consequences in the Arab world, where the Ottoman Empire was losing its hold on the lands and peoples under its control. The attention paid to the poetry of this period, as well as to the Arab poets' responses to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the substantial literary production during the period of the British Mandate, exhibits the already concerted involvement of Palestinian and Arab writers with the events taking place in Palestine prior to 1948, the year of the *nakba* or 'catastrophe'. It serves further, as Darwish insisted, to locate the contemporary resistance movement and its literary expression in a historical process with its own internal ideological debates and contradictions. The changing thematic dimensions of the poetry, documented in Sulaiman's study, from religion and nationalism in the pre-1948 period, to the humanitarian representation of Palestinian refugees following the *nakba* and leading to the committed poetry of resistance after the establishment of an independent Palestinian resistance organisation in 1967, testify to the collective project of poets, critics, freedom fighters and historians.

Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry is both a history and an anthology. Of the many hundreds of poems examined by the critic, substantial sections of the verses, often entire poems, are reproduced in the text, which provides the Arabic original and its (albeit sometimes quite loose) English translation. The poems are decisively embedded in their material and historical context, thus opening up new possibilities for their critical interpretation. And although *Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry* stops in 1975, before the 1979 Camp David agreement and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, it makes available to the critic, as well as the historian, the materials necessary for a re-evaluation of conventional literary, ideological and historical categories. Narrative, chronology, poetic texts and bibliography combine in the volume to produce a valuable archival resource. Arab critics, such as Elias Khouri in his collection of critical essays on contemporary Arab literature, *The Lost Memory (al-Dhakira al-Mafquda)* (1982), have begun to propose new parameters for the study of Arabic literature which enlist the reader in an investigation of the historical coordinates of cultural production. For Elias Khouri, it is the Arab historical memory which is threatened by current events and their ideological distortions. Khalid Sulaiman's *Palestine and Modern Arabic Poetry*, on the other hand, by providing an active literary history for the Palestinian question, in turn contributes significantly to the production of a new literary and historical memory on the part of English-speaking readers in the West.

Cornell University, New York

BARBARA HARLOW

Slavery in Dutch South Africa

By NIGEL WORDEN (London, Cambridge University Press, 1985). 224pp., £22.50.

The colonial school of African historiography has propagated two myths about slavery in South Africa: the first being that, since the Cape of Good Hope Settlement rested in the main on a leisurely, subsistence economy, the treatment of slaves was relatively mild; and the second being that small-scale slave ownership was conducive to paternalism which mitigated the asperity inherent in slavery.

Nigel Worden's book is a well-researched study of slavery at the Cape during the rule of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), from 1652 to 1795. He demolishes these myths. The book shows that the Cape's slave economy produced grain and wine, beef and mutton for an internal and external market; that with the expansion of that economy, farming became extensive and labour intensive. Consequently, the slaves had to work as hard and were as badly treated as those in the New World.

In contrast to Caribbean and Brazilian slavery, the Cape did not develop a monoculture system which, owned by absentee landlords, supplied a metropolitan market with a vital tropical crop. The slaveholders at the Cape were resident burghers, most of whom owned less than twenty slaves. Even so, paternalism could not take root in the master-slave relationship. For one thing, the majority of slaves were imported, not locally born, having been brought from Mozambique and Malagasy, India and Indonesia. For another, the Cape slaveholder regularly bought and sold slaves, breaking up their family life and thereby inhibiting the development of a stable patriarchal relationship with them.

The author's account of slave resistance in the Cape, however, is pro-saic and his explanation of why no slave revolts broke out during the period of Dutch rule perfunctory. (Robert Ross's *Cape of Torments: slavery and resistance in South Africa* covers this important aspect of slave life imaginatively and treats the subject with empathy.)

Eugene Genovese has listed eight conditions that favoured slave revolts and guerrilla warfare: (1) the slaveholders were absentee landlords, as a result of which there was depersonalisation and greater cultural estrangement between masters and slaves; (2) famine and economic distress occurred; (3) slaveholders, on average, each owned from 100 to 200 slaves rather than twenty or so, as in the American South and South Africa; (4) the ruling class split as a result of warfare between slaveholding countries or bitter struggles within a slave colony; (5) the blacks in a slave colony heavily outnumbered whites; (6) slaves born in their native lands heavily outnumbered those born in a slave colony; (7) the social structure of the slaveholding regime permitted the emergence of an autonomous black or slave leadership, and (8) the

geographical, social and political environment provided terrain and opportunity for the formation of colonies of runaway slaves – strong enough to pose a threat to the slaveholding regime.

At the Cape, only one of these conditions obtained: foreign-born slaves outnumbered those locally born, though not heavily. Even so, such foreign-born slaves of different ethnic origins could not form a cohesive group to stage rebellion. In addition, they lived in small groups widely dispersed over the vast Colony. The total slave population of 14,747 in 1793 did not greatly outnumber the 13,830 Dutch burghers – one reason why the rulers did not create a legally defined mulatto stratum as a social buffer. All freed slaves, of whatever colour, were simply called free blacks.

The mountains and forests, the long and unguarded northern and eastern frontiers encouraged escape as the main form of slave resistance. Some runaway slaves set up small maroon colonies in the more inaccessible parts of the Colony. Others fled across the northern frontier; and when the expanding settlement made contact with the Xhosa tribes in the eastern Cape, many slaves found refuge with them. Yet there was never any prospect that runaway slaves could imperil the Colony: their numbers were too small.

In one respect, the Cape slaves were more badly treated than those in the New World: manumission was extremely difficult. Slaves could qualify for emancipation only if they were baptised, spoke Dutch and found people who would pay a sum of money to the authorities to cover the costs if they became a burden on the poor fund. Moreover, slaves had to pay for their freedom. These stringent measures account for the fact that in the eighteenth century the free blacks comprised no more than eight per cent of the total population.

In the final chapter of his book, Nigel Worden writes: 'Although institutionalised racism did not emerge until late in South Africa's history ... society in the areas dominated by slavery at the beginning of the nineteenth century was already polarised along racial lines in the rural regions and was moving in that direction in the city [of Cape Town].' Yet until the end of Dutch rule at the Cape, society was not rigidly bifurcated between white and black. The free burghers were called 'Christians' and the blacks 'heathen'. The colour line was often obliterated by considerations of religion, of property and culture. Thus, emancipated slaves who married Dutch burghers were classed as Dutch, as were their offspring. Such mixed marriages were frequent in the eighteenth century in view of the shortage of white women. Some people of mixed and slave descent occupied prominent positions in the Cape administration.

After the British occupied the Cape in 1806, the terms 'white' and 'black' came into general usage.

London

KEN JORDAAN

The Myth of Black progress

By ALPHONSO PINKNEY (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1984). 198pp., £15.

Blacks and Whites: narrowing the gap?

By REYNOLDS FARLEY (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1984). 235pp., £17.25.

The current debate over the nature and extent of black progress since the 1960s has fundamental political as well as analytic implications. The assertion of progress is closely associated with the argument that enough has been done for 'the Negro' – indeed, it is as often claimed that too much has been done – and that the time for special treatment is past. The United States, it is asserted, should return to its 'colour blind', individualistic history and the black should stand on his or her own feet.

Nathan Glazer, a leading anti-affirmative action social scientist, for example, has argued that much of black unemployment comes not from the operation of a racist system but from 'the alternative attractions of welfare' and the refusal of young blacks to take jobs because of the alternative attractions of 'illicit activities'. (Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that these are two of four possible explanations cited by Farley for black joblessness.)

As for the assertion of progress, Ben Wattenberg and Richard Scammon, for example, reported in 1973 that 'For the first time in the history of the republic truly large and growing numbers of American blacks have been moving into the middle class, so that by now these numbers can reasonably be said to add up to a *majority* of black Americans – a slender majority, but a majority nevertheless.' Or take the work of black sociologist William Wilson, who in his book, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and changing American institutions*, claimed that 'Race relations in America have undergone fundamental changes in recent years, so much so that now the life chances of individual blacks have more to do with their economic class position than with their day-to-day encounters with whites.' How we separate the economic class position of black people from the operations of a racist society is not altogether clear and it seems a bit late in the day to be equating racism with 'day-to-day encounters with whites'.

Alphonso Pinkney challenges such a view of black progress, and the interpretation of data which has been used by Glazer, Wattenberg and Scammon, Wilson and others of their ilk. He argues, for example, that Wattenberg and Scammon arrive at their conclusion that a slender majority of blacks are now middle class by including in the middle class 'plasterers, painters, bus drivers, lathe operators, secretaries, bank tellers, and automobile assembly-line workers'. More importantly, he

makes a conceptual point about how to approach the question – a point so obvious it should hardly need restating. ‘In order to gauge black progress it is necessary to evaluate each institution in the society in relationship to others, for they are inter-related.’

This he does. He describes the current political environment – resurgent racism, fascist and racist violence, government undermining of the reforms of the 1960s, its open opposition to affirmative action and its cuts in the social programmes most used by black people. He looks at how institutions operate, how they interconnect and at what the implications are for black people. From this analysis, he finds not a ‘declining significance of race’ but, rather, the continuing centrality of racism.

Reynolds Farley also looks at the question of black progress in his demographic study. He identifies three major interpretations of the situation of blacks since the 1960s – an optimistic one, a pessimistic one and one which emphasises economic polarisation within the black community. After analysing the data, he presents a scorecard on black progress and finds three indicators showing improvement: educational attainment, occupations of the employed and earnings of employed workers. He found four mixed indicators: integration of schools, the incomes of families, poverty and residential segregation. He identifies only one indicator showing no improvement: the level of unemployment. Therefore, he concludes that ‘The view that black gains are widespread and significant is the most accurate of the three, but its optimism needs to be tempered.’

The validity and significance of this conclusion must, however, be treated with some caution because of the author’s underlying assumptions and interpretation of the data. In his treatment of education, for example, there is little sense of what actually constitutes the education dealt out to the majority of black youngsters. The widespread literature documenting the destruction of black children in American schools (e.g., Kozol, Leacock, Rist, Rubenstein, Stein, Wasserman) is ignored as the author analyses the data on the number of years schools were attended or the level of integration of black and white children. When he discusses the declining, but continuing, disparity between white and black young people in higher education, he does not, as does Pinkney, discuss the significance of the fact that 46 per cent of blacks in higher education are attending two-year community colleges. Nor does he actually discuss what is happening to those blacks attending largely white, four-year colleges. There is widespread evidence of deteriorating academic attainment and self-confidence in the face of racist institutions which, at best, ignore them and their history and culture. At worst, there is an increasing level of overt racist behaviour such as occurred in March 1984 at the University of California, Santa Barbara, during a student government organised entertainment, when a white fraternity

put on Afro-wigs and the shoe polish and performed a 'nigger minstrel' show and the compere strapped on a plastic penis and announced that 'this proves that blacks are not the only ones with big dicks'.

Even by his own indicators of progress Farley concludes that there are decades separating black men from white men, and that where the gap between black women and white women appears to have been eroded, the gender gap remains inviolable. But more crucially, there is little sense in his work of the operation of institutional racism or of the role which racism has played and is playing in American society.

Unless analysts confront the reality of American history and society – the simple reality that racism divides the working class and thus provides the capitalist class with both productive labour and social control – then analyses of the degree of black progress will at best be incomplete. At worst, as in the works criticised by Pinkney, they will be part of a reactionary politics designed to undo the changes and reforms of the Second Reconstruction.

Therefore, while Farley is undoubtedly correct to see improvements since the 1960s – and Pinkney agrees 'that black people made significant strides during the civil rights movement of the 1960s' – the question still remains how deep these changes have gone. A related question is, if there have been fundamental changes in both the position of black people and in white attitudes, as is so frequently asserted, how has the New Right and Moral Majority been able to use racism so effectively in the mobilisation of white voters to elect and re-elect one of the most reactionary and racist administrations of recent decades?

Pinkney argues that these changes 'only marginally affected the daily lives of most black families. Most of these families exert an exceptional amount of time and energy attempting to earn a living in an era of high inflation and high unemployment.' He sees the right-wing assault on black people continuing, and that blacks need to learn from the failure of the civil rights leadership to address seriously basic economic issues. 'If progress is to be made in the general status of blacks, economic advancement is crucial.' And if no progress is made and if there is no improvement in the lives of black youths, 'it is possible that they will make life in urban America difficult, to put it mildly'.

University of Manchester

LOUIS KUSHNICK

The Unbelonging

By JOAN RILEY (London, The Women's Press, 1985). 144pp., £2.95.

Hyacinth, at the age of 11, is dragged from the country and the people she knows to a bleak, loveless Britain. Here, she rejects her colour in the face of brutal racism and her sexuality in the face of sexual violation. In place of an identity to sustain her or a family to succour her, she looks to her roots and hides in a romantic notion of the Jamaica to which she

will return to find security. The book charts her fumbling attempts to accept her blackness and to relate to men. And finally ends with her myth of return exploded. Hyacinth cannot take the poverty, the stench, the 'rudeness' of the Jamaica slum from which she came and of which her childhood dreams were made.

But this is not a negative book. Beside Hyacinth in her coming of age (which takes place mainly at university in the UK) is Perlene – a vibrant, politically aware, well balanced black activist. It is she who explains that 'black is beautiful', that black is a political colour, that colonialism has been replaced by imperialism, and that is why different and harsher contradictions abound in the 'home countries'. Hyacinth cannot accept this political vision or understanding until she has rid herself of the false shadows of her childhood. So though the book ends with her flight from her 'roots', it also holds out the beginnings of a truer political journey.

There are weaknesses in the book. Joan Riley tends to dwell on the individual psychological (and psycho-sexual) dilemmas of her heroine and rarely in her larger political message does she appear to go beyond a simple Pan-African nationalism. Nonetheless, the overall message of the novel is radical – the possibility of human growth and transformation.

The Unbelonging is not brilliantly written nor seamlessly constructed. Its characterisation is often weak, with the 'political' message frequently obtruding above the story line. But it always has pace and a sense of drama.

There are very few novels published in Britain from young black writers and those that reach publication (including *The Unbelonging*) are more often than not closely autobiographical. Unlike American black fiction (especially women's), black British writers have chosen realism rather than fantasy to convey their message – the message of racism, rejection and 'unbelonging'. If a tradition of black writing is being created in the UK by authors like Joan Riley, let's hope it continues in this mould – continues to tell the tales of working-class black people's lives and struggles and to tell them simply and directly, without self-conscious literary devices.

Institute of Race Relations

JENNY BOURNE

Ethnicity and Race in the USA: toward the twenty-first century

Edited by RICHARD D. ALBA (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) 186pp., £15.00.

This is an uneven book but one of enormous value. As an attempt to cover comprehensively all the major ethnic groups in the United States, it has startling gaps. There is no denying that the Irish are as important a group as the Italians, yet they are not allotted a chapter while the

Italians are – perhaps because the book was compiled from papers given at a Conference on Ethnicity and Race (New York, April 1984).

The chapter on black Americans contains a considerable amount of up-to-date information but the author, Reynolds Farley, uses it in such a way as to be positively misleading. He talks for instance about the increase in white collar occupations since 1960 for black men (from 1 in 7 to 1 in 3 employed black men) but fails to point out that proportionately fewer black men are now employed at all so those figures are artificially high. Admittedly, unemployment figures are evaluated later in the chapter but are not connected up to his earlier over-congratulatory conclusions. His statistics on women are interesting. Can it be true that there is now no pay differential between black and white women doing similar jobs? He does not say how many do have similar jobs, too few perhaps to be really significant. But when Farley discusses educational segregation illusions are cast aside. He concludes that 'In most of the nation's population centers, black and white students go to separate schools now just as they did when *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) was the constitutional principle'.

The chapter on American Indians by Robert Jarvenpa is conservative to say the least. The estimate of Indian numbers before white immigration is only 2 to 4 million and the dubious merits of the Indian Reorganisation Act of 1934 are referred to as 'culturally sensitive'. Jarvenpa also refers to the 'cultural distinctiveness' of the Navaho without any acknowledgement that they survived in such high numbers partly because they borrowed useable cultural patterns and practices from other tribes. Far more useful is the well-informed section on urbanisation and the pan-Indian movement. Here he relies on a well-balanced combination of personal experience and verifiable facts. His conclusions may be controversial but they are stimulating.

Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans fare rather better in the hands of Candace Nelson and Marta Tienda. The differences and similarities between Hispanic groups are evaluated with skill and insight. Easy platitudes are eschewed in favour of careful analysis and the confusion surrounding the area is clarified without denying its complexity.

Chapters on other ethnic groups such as Jews and Italians seem well-balanced and up to date in their research. But possibly the most useful chapter for a non-specialist reader is the one on pluralism that compares the impact of membership of racial, ethnic and religious groups. The authors, Yancey, Ericksen and Leon, focus on Philadelphia but their conclusions have universal application. While they in no way underestimate the positive value of belonging to different racial, ethnic or religious groups, they consider that the negative aspects are largely a consequence of economic and social circumstances. Changing those circumstances is still a task that remains to be tackled.

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THE SUN SAYS True racists

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