

RACE & CLASS

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.THE SECRET STATE... THOMPSON E.P.

Sociobiology's fairyland
State formations in Latin America
Black psyches
Radical Jewish theatre
Memorial to Rashed Hussein



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The secret state*

Behind President Carter's 'human rights' rhetoric lies the reality of dozens of dependent dictatorships in the Third World. Meanwhile, in the developed capitalist nations, whose leaders pride themselves on the liberty enjoyed by their citizens, new measures of social control are being introduced. In Britain the targets of these attacks include the right of citizens to know what is done in their name.

The deportation from Britain of Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball and the prosecution, under the Official Secrets Act, of Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell have been part of a concerted campaign by the state to stop journalists from writing about matters of which it is determined the public should remain ignorant. By its actions the British state has focussed attention not only on official secrecy but also on the very questions it sought to hide from view — the operations of the CIA in Britain, western Europe and the Third World; the increased size of British security services and their brief to keep political activists under surveillance, and the role of Signal Intelligence (SIGINT), not only in monitoring the communist world, but in eavesdropping on the communications of many Third World countries.

E.P. Thompson, the historian, here takes up two aspects thrown up by these cases. First, the secrecy that surrounds the British state and especially those agencies concerned with surveillance and covert actions at home and abroad. Secondly, he takes the left to task for failing to respond on questions of civil liberties and democratic rights

E.P. THOMPSON, distinguished historian and writer, is the author of *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).

*This essay is the Introduction to the *Review of Security and the State 1978* (compiled by State Research) which is being published by Julian Friedmann Books.

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in the past decade. Throughout the last two hundred years the libertarian strand of radical and working-class groups have come together to oppose repeated attempts by the state to curb political rights. This 'nerve of outrage' is in urgent need of re-discovery. In particular, he attacks those on the left who dismiss the need for action on the grounds that all states, all police, all law are bad. And, in doing so, Thompson takes up questions which are relevant not only to Britain but to all liberal democracies.

In the informative and carefully-researched papers which follow, the authors have been at care not to intrude upon the text with their opinions. In this, one part of the value of State Research is to be found.

The task which the authors have set themselves is both difficult and hazardous, for they are concerned with disclosing the mode of operation of some of the most secretive and arrogant 'servants' (in practice often *masters*) among modern bureaucratic states. It is difficult to disclose these operations, because these are generally defined by the operators themselves as 'official secrets'; what the operators themselves wish to secrete from public view they are empowered to classify as forbidden materials, and to defend from publicity by a number of sanctions — not only, as a final resort, the implementation of the Official Secrets Act, but also the recourse to 'D Notices', pressure (or favours) towards journalists and editors, the deportation of insubordinate aliens (such as Agee and Hosenball), the disciplining of civil servants (who have already been passed through the screens of 'positive vetting') and so on. And if, by the careful accumulation of evidence from public sources, independent investigators are able to reconstruct these operations with some accuracy, then they instantly become possessed of an 'official secret' which they publish at their own hazard.

This is the double-bind within which the British public has been held, for many years, by its own security services, and increasingly in recent years by the police and other agencies of government. It has worked so well that, whereas the CIA is now a household word, many people have only the haziest notion as to the character and functions of MI5, MI6 or the Special Branch of the police. Indeed, for a large part of the public, these organizations might not exist; or, if they do, they are thought of as either counter-espionage agencies, playing a John Le Carré game of spooks with the Russians, or as emergency flying squads brought into being, on an *ad hoc* basis, to counter evident threats from hijackers, bombers or alien terrorists. It would amaze many British citizens to learn that these and other organizations are only at the end of a long historical line of ruling-class institutions, with agents or informants in trade unions, educational institutes and political organizations (especially of the left), and with direct access to the postal and telephone system of the country; that they are larger and more powerful, and less subject to ministerial or parliamentary

control than they have ever been, and that a large part of their function has always been to invigilate the British people themselves.

The most satisfactory conditions for the effective operation of these organs of the state — and also for the operation of private information-gathering organs such as the Economic League — are ones in which they can lie low, beneath the threshold of public consciousness and concern. When Mr Merlyn Rees, the Home Secretary, introduced the pitiful government White Paper on the 'reform' of the Official Secrets Act, he retorted to one of his own critical back-benchers that 'he doubted whether more than two or three of his constituents care about the issue' (*The Times*, 20 July 1978). That is certainly the situation which he and his advisers hope to be the case. One objective of State Research is to ensure that no Home Secretary will dare in the future to address such an insult to the House of Commons and to the British public. If government refuses to enlighten the people, then such private initiatives as State Research must supply that want.



The authors of this work are of the view that their purposes can best be served by scrupulous objectivity and the painstaking accumulation, from public records, of factual accounts. They do not offer any general theory of the state, and still less any wholesale invective against all organs of power. But they have invited me, as an independent reader, to offer a more general comment on their enterprise. I approve warmly of this enterprise, and I am honoured by the invitation. But I must make it clear that my comments are of a personal nature — and they come from a person committed, as a historian and as a citizen, to the libertarian traditions of the radical and working-class movements of this country. My comments do not carry the authors' assent or endorsement. Indeed, I have not met the authors, and we have not discussed the issues together. It is probable that, in this or that particular, we may disagree.

I have already said that the operators of the British security services are 'some of the most secretive and arrogant' to be found in modern bureaucratic states. My words were chosen with care, and are intended to be neither complacent nor alarmist. I am insisting upon a peculiar combination of invisibility, lack of accountability and the consequent composure of an antique ruling group which has been bred to govern from behind a wall of silence. The situation could, very certainly, be worse, and, if we are not alert, it will become worse. The German security organs are blatant and massively visible, in an old Prussian statist tradition; and they have seized gratefully upon the opportunity provided by Baader-Meinhof to enlarge their brutal presence in civil life. In Russia and in several parts of eastern Europe it is never possible to disentangle the motives of administration from those of 'security' and control, and in significant areas it is

not possible to speak of civil rights or of a rule of law at all. In the United States we have witnessed three decades of the frightening enlargement of agencies of 'security' (including massive espionage, provocation, 'dirty tricks' and possibly even assassinations committed against their own citizens); but this has at length been met, by the American liberal tradition, in a very vigorous counter-attack, in which some journalists and lawyers have played an honourable part. Without this counter-attack, which included the massive 'leakage' and then the legally-enforced disclosure of 'secret' documents and tapes, the mountain of official excreta known as 'Watergate' would never have been exposed to public view. And it is now possible, under the US Freedom of Information Act, for victims of these organs (such as the sons of the Rosenbergs or Alger Hiss) to gain access to some part of the documentation necessary for their vindication.

Thus the United States security organs are more powerful and more intrusive, but they have suffered a public check, are disgraced in the eyes of many American citizens and are at last subject to some legal accountability. In this area at least, the American liberal tradition has turned out to be much tougher than the British. It is now a platitude — but one which bears repeating — that in Britain a 'Watergate' could not have occurred exactly in that way; but if it had occurred, in a more 'British' way, the British press would neither have been able nor have dared to disclose the facts about it, and the British public would have been told only so much as certain 'wise men' of the Establishment thought it safe to allow them to know.

Thus British security operations are distinguished by their invisibility and their lack of accountability. (This is so much the case that even sections of the British left customarily denounce — as they should — the conspiracies of 'the CIA', overlooking the fact that for decades the invisible British counterparts have collaborated unreservedly with United States agents, fed them with information on British subjects and shielded them from exposure behind the same screen that protects themselves). They are also distinguished by a peculiar quality of ruling-class composure and arrogance.

A historian is bound to reflect upon the particular route which led us into this situation. Not much more than one hundred years ago, the British people were distinguished throughout the world for their resistance — at least on their own home ground — to the pretensions of the state. This resistance stemmed not only from 'Radical' but also from 'Tory' sources. The settlement of 1688 had been marked, above all, by jealousy of the crown, and, hence, of the central powers of the state. The gentry emerged as the rulers of England, and (more selectively) of Scotland and Wales also. In the eighteenth century, as the limited resources of parliamentary democracy became obstructed and corrupted, and as the aristocracy and great gentry enlarged their lands and wealth and their purchase upon interest and patronage, so

both Whig and Tory magnates enlarged their hostility to a bureaucratized and rationalized state: they wished to be left free to govern in their own way within their own spheres of influence. This was very far from being a democratic impulse; but it did, in the Whig tradition, afford shelter for libertarian modes of thought, in continued jealousy of central power and in vigorous resistance to the examples of absolutism provided by continental monarchies.

By the end of the eighteenth century, this was an all-pervasive Whiggish rhetoric, shared by Tories, Whigs and Radicals alike. Moreover, it was a rhetoric taken over and applied to greatly more democratic ends, by the rising popular reform movement. The parliamentary oligarchs wished to contain their debates within the privacy of the walls of parliament; they did not wish the British people to overhear how their governors talked, in private, about them. Wilkes and the printers defied 'the law' and breached this privacy; we owe *Hansard* to this defiance. In area after area, the 'common people' insisted that the civil rights of the 'freeborn Englishman' were not the privileges of an elite but were the common inheritance of all: freedom of press, speech and conscience, rights of assembly, inhibitions upon the actions of military or police against crowds, freedom from arbitrary imprisonment or unwarranted arrest and entry upon private premises. The insurgent British working-class movement took over for its own the old Whiggish bloody-mindedness of the citizen in the face of the pretensions of power. Even when labouring under the manifest class discrimination of the Combination Acts, the secretary of an illegal trade union branch of framework knitters in Mansfield in 1812 was able to protest against a clause in a Bill proposed by the workers' representatives themselves, which authorized the search for shoddy goods in the houses of manufacturers: 'if iver that bullwark is broke down of every english mans hous being his Castil then that strong barrer is for iver broke that so many of our ancesters have bled for and in vain.' The workers had appropriated the democratic precedents and practices of past generations for their own; the ancestors were not 'theirs' but 'ours'.

And this was how matters continued for at least one hundred years. The Chartist, Radical Liberal, Irish Nationalist and formative Labour movements were distinguished by their sensitivity to libertarian issues, and their suspicion of the polity of statism. When the police forces were enlarged and rationalized (or, as some would have it today, 'modernized') in the mid-nineteenth century, this was a victory for bourgeois utilitarian bureaucratic policy in the face of intense resistance extending from old Tory localism through Radical Liberalism to outright Chartist opposition — for Chartists and trade unionists very well understood what kind of imperatives dictated government policies. As a consequence of this opposition, the presence of the police in British public life remained unusually

subdued. They must be seen as 'servants' of either the gentry or 'the public', and they must in no circumstances exhibit a brash public presence. And, as a more concrete evidence of the old libertarian tradition, which endures to this day, the British police (at least in Britain) must go about the streets unarmed.

There were some anticipations of the statism of the twentieth century in the increasingly intrusive and punitive presence of the police in Britain in the 1880s. This was a natural reaction of the propertied classes, who reacted to the rumour that there were now socialist agitators in the streets (making speeches against *their property!*) with seemly terror. In general the police were impartial, attempting to sweep off the streets with an equable hand street-traders, beggars, prostitutes, street-entertainers, pickets, children playing football and free-thinking and socialist speakers alike. The pretext, very often, was that a complaint of interruption of trade had been received from a shopkeeper. William Morris remarked on the impatience of 'the more luxurious part of society' to 'clear the streets of costermongers, organs, processions, and lecturers of all kinds, and make them a sort of decent prison corridors, with people just trudging to and from their work'. Less evidently impartial were the statements and actions of Sir Charles Warren, who, in the face of mounting demonstrations by unemployed, Radicals, Socialists and Irish Nationalists, was appointed chief-commissioner of the London metropolitan police in 1886. Here he engaged in exercises of 'public relations' quite as vigorous as any subsequently set in motion by Sir Robert Mark or Sir David McNee. He presided over the processions of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and also over the processions which culminated in his banning all meetings in Trafalgar Square (on the grounds that it was crown property) and the subsequent episode of 'Bloody Sunday' when demonstrators were scattered by massive police and military forces, and with a violence which, in any accounting, was unnecessary and inexpedient. But Warren had overplayed his hand, the Liberal Party was shocked and riven down the middle. The general dislike of his methods was fuelled by the public's dislike of the police's treatment of women, and by the conspicuous failure of Warren's forces to solve the 'Jack the Ripper' murders. When Warren refused outright to accept the instructions of the Home Secretary, he was forced, with the *douceur* of a KCB, to exchange the command of London for the command of Singapore (1889).

I do not mind about the KCB. I am perfectly willing for all over-mighty security officers and police to be given KCBs, so long as they are dismissed. I have introduced the case of Sir Charles Warren for two other reasons. First, it is a reminder — and an important reminder, in the face of a certain pessimistic determinism which is in fashion on the left — that it is not absolutely foreclosed and

prescribed that ordinary people will lose every contest with power. The history of the past ninety years is not an unrelieved record of the enlargement of the powers of the state, and of the impudence of its officers. Because people made enough row, Warren was sacked, Trafalgar Square was re-opened and, in the main, has stayed open (apart from demonstrations about Ireland); the battle for free speech in the streets was, largely, won, for the Radicals and Socialists at least.

The second reason, however, is less comforting. Sir Charles Warren signals the feed-back of imperialism — its experience and its consequences — to the streets of the imperial capital itself. Glancing at the *Dictionary of National Biography* I see that, before serving as metropolitan police commissioner, he had gained military experience in Gibraltar and Griqualand West; had commanded the Diamond Fields Horse in the Kafir war (1877-8), and had been military and civil administrator of the Bechuanaland protectorate. He came from Suakin to London, and departed thence to Singapore; he served with distinction in the Boer war ('he cleared the country between the Orange River and the Vaal'), and was a founder member of the Boy Scouts. He was, in short, a representative figure of the imperialist climax; and he reminds us of the inter-recruitment, cross-postings and exchange of both ideology and experience between those who learned to handle crowds, invigilate subversives and engage in measures of 'pacification' in the external empire, and those who struggled with the labour problem, the unemployed question, the women problem and sometimes just the people problem, at home.

We are entering the world of a John Buchan novel — British imperial interests are endangered by alien agents and by subversive rotters at home (perhaps even by milksops in the Cabinet?), but our hero knows that he can rely upon a few absolutely trustworthy people — men who went to the same privileged school, served together on the North-West Frontier or between the Orange River and the Vaal, and who bump up against each other in select London clubs or deer-stalking on the Scottish moors. These people know better than 'the politicians', and very much better than the public, what British interests are. They accept, with a grimace of resignation, the duty to save Britain from herself.

That is the novelettish way of seeing it. But in fact it remains true that the growth of an unrepresentative and unaccountable state within the state has been a product of the twentieth century. Its growth was, paradoxically, actually aided by the unpopularity of security and policing agencies; forced by this into the lowest possible visibility, they learned to develop techniques of invisible influence and control. It was also aided by the British tradition of civil service neutrality: this sheltered senior civil servants from replacement or investigation when administrations changed, and afforded to their

policies the legitimation of 'impartial, non-political' intent. Ministers, and prime ministers, increasingly became putty, on questions of 'security', in their senior advisers' hands. They were handed their briefs, and — often, in the press of business, with the haziest understanding of these — they knew that it was their first business in the House to defend their own advisers or departments. And it must be admitted that Labour ministers have shown the greatest eagerness to learn the same lessons of loyalty to their 'servants', and no one has been more eager than Mr Merlyn Rees.

A complex of forces has impelled the increasing statism of the past decades, and I will only mention two or three. Very obviously, two world wars have not only habituated people to uniform and to the arguments of national interest, but have also facilitated such lesser (but significant) perquisites as the busy exchanges between Oxford and Cambridge colleges and Whitehall, as scholars have done their bit in Intelligence. The rapid erosion of empire has perforce retracted the imperial ideology, has brought it back home, into the security services, the army and the police, where experience gained in Ireland, India or Rhodesia, looks restively for new fields of application — these services are the last refuges of imperialism, within which a ghostly imperial ideology survives its former host.

There is also the very substantial, and very seldom mentioned, legacy of the British phase of 'McCarthyism' in the high cold war. This resulted in extensive 'positive vetting' procedures in the public services, which were subjected to an opaque and pusillanimous enquiry, under the chairmanship of the late Lord Radcliffe, in 1961-2. The brief of this committee was to enquire into the measures of safeguarding information in the civil service against the intelligence services of foreign powers — although not, it seems, of the CIA — and against 'subversive organizations in this country, of which in current conditions the most formidable is the Communist Party of Great Britain, with its fringe of associated bodies and sympathisers'. This was a flexible definition, for 'current conditions' may change, and in the past fifteen years, as the Communist Party has become increasingly less 'formidable', one wonders what other organizations, fringes and sympathizers have been added to the subversive list? In any case, the Radcliffe committee proceeded on the assumption that any sound security man would know, instantly, what was subversive and what was not, remarking at one point: 'We have followed the common practice of using the phrase "communist" throughout to include fascists.' The point is that *any* term would have been as good as any other — anarchist, situationist, rapist or agronomist — provided that it signified to the proper people opinions and associations which, in current conditions, proper people disapprove.

There are two further points. First, liberal-minded opinion in Britain today is very properly angered by the loud and intrusive

measures (*Berufsverbote*, etc.) of the West German authorities against political dissenters of the left. I am glad that this solidarity is being shown. But it is not always remembered that the *Berufsverbote* of 'positive vetting' goes on in the British public services every day, in ways that are certainly less intrusive and that are very certainly less loud. What goes on, in the screening of applicants, in the promotion of public servants and in their allocation to different departments, we do not know; nor do we know what criteria are employed; and we would not be told even if we (or the House of Commons) asked. All that we do know is that men and women are passed through screens which select, for the most privileged and influential positions, those whose records appear to be most 'moderate', conservative and orthodox. It is perhaps time that a Russell Tribunal sat in Whitehall. Where — and this is my second point — it could take no evidence, since evidence would be, by definition, an 'official secret'.

This is to return once more to the John Buchan theme. The ruling group within the state in Britain has a kind of arrogance about it which may be historically unique. It has a settled habit of power, a composure of power, inherited from generations of rule, renewed by imperial authority, and refreshed perennially from the springs of the best public schools. It is a group which does not bother, or need to bother, to get itself elected. It knows what 'British interests' are, and defends these through every change of political weather. It decides whether you or I are subversive, and whether our actions should be watched. It does not have to justify its decisions in any public arena. It rules, unobtrusively, from within.

What it does is an 'official secret'. For example, do the security services simply invigilate 'subversives', and pass on information promptly to appropriate authorities, or do they also engage in provocations and 'dirty tricks'? A historian is well aware of the latter in the longer record. At one time, in the Napoleonic wars, the main centre of underground English 'Jacobinism' was, with some difficulty, kept in being only by the unremitting efforts of several government spies, as a kind of honey-pot in London which might attract to it unwary reformers. In the next decades, the official papers in the Public Record Office are abundantly covered in the slime left behind by Oliver, Castles and successive spies and provocateurs within the Chartist and Irish movements. In later decades the trail is less evident, because it has been more effectively obscured. Not only are matters of 'security' covered by a 100- (or 75-) year rule prohibiting disclosure, but even where the records are opened one may sometimes detect where the hand of a 'weeder' has been at work. (A 'weeder' is a scrupulous civil servant trained as an *anti*-historian, whose business it is to remove from the files obnoxious materials.) Occasionally, among such a superfluity of materials, a 'weeder' makes a boob. Not long ago a Labour historian fell, to his great

surprise, upon some papers in a file which showed, incontrovertibly, that one among the top five or six national leaders of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1930s was passing copious reports upon that movement's inner councils to the authorities. A few weeks later some 'weeder' spotted the grave blunder. The papers were removed, and all sign of their existence was erased.

The innocent might suppose that such practices will have been curbed by the rise of Labour to political influence, and (purportedly) to power. If any such innocents still exist, they should read and reflect upon Sir Harold Wilson's account of his handling of the national seamen's strike in 1966 (in chapter 14 of *The Labour Government, 1964-1970: a personal record*). The seamen's union, which for decades had been reduced to little more than a servile 'company' shop, had at length, in response to the pressures of its own membership, proclaimed a strike in furtherance of a series of demands for improved wages and conditions. As ship after ship tied up in British ports, the crews joined the strike with enthusiasm. And also with unusual militancy — partly because conditions of work were bad, partly because a long record of union torpor had at last been broken, but particularly because a national strike of seamen is one of the most difficult industrial encounters to organize, and once it has been launched the seamen *must* hold firm until they obtain the optimum settlement. The usual mechanisms for fobbing-off such crises — for example, a minor concession, on condition that the strike is called off, followed by some committee of enquiry, and the distant hope of further concessions — can never be acceptable to seamen. For once the ships are untied and have put to sea again, for a hundred disparate destinations, they cannot be abruptly recalled again to muscle the union's negotiations: to strike on the high seas, or to turn back to port, is mutiny. Thus, in 1966, even the union's very moderate leaders acted — and, for a time, actually were — very tough. They must stand out for the maximum settlement, since it might be many years before they were in so strong a bargaining position again.

That was the seamen's side of the matter. The other side of the matter is so familiar that I scarcely need to rehearse it, since it is the background of 'national interests in danger' against which, for fifteen years, every strike has been enacted. The livelihood of 'the nation' was endangered; the national economic crisis was acute; the pound was falling; the government's policies of wage restraint must not be breached. The Minister of Labour at that time, Mr Ray Gunter, was a well-known 'Red-baiter', who was eventually to find that even Harold Wilson's Labour Party was too red for him to continue as a member. But Wilson and Gunter acted smoothly together in setting in motion the familiar and grossly-inequitable repertoire of power. A state of emergency was declared. The armed services were called upon, but

only for limited purposes ('I announced the use of RAF Transport Command planes for help with urgent export shipments'). The TUC and a Court of Inquiry were brought in to bully the seamen's leaders. Wilson broadcast to the nation on television. Finally, in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister placed full responsibility for the strike upon a 'tightly knit group of politically motivated men'. As he recounts in his reminiscences, 'I did not use the word "Communist", though no one in the House or in the press, which next morning headlined my words as a sensation, had any doubts whom I had in mind.'

'The fact was,' his account continues, 'that the moderate members of the seamen's executive were virtually terrorised by a small group of professional Communists or near-Communists ...' But there was one trouble with this story: as every informed member of the trade union movement knew, there was *not one single Communist* on the executive of the National Union of Seamen. (If the 'moderates' were terrorized by anyone, apart from Wilson and Gunter, they were terrorized by the militancy of their own members). Hence, eight days later, Wilson was forced into an unusual predicament in which he raised, for a brief instant, the veil of political lies and half-truths which is normally held between the public and the state within the state. 'From various sources we began to receive undeniable evidence of what was going on', he tells us. (These sources may have been as 'various' as MI this or that, the Special Branch and the Economic League). Addressing the House once more, he itemized the (pathetically-small) resources of Bert Ramelson, the Communist Party's industrial organizer: 'He has three full-time officials on his staff' — i.e. rather fewer than the staff of a firm making bicycle-clips, and very much fewer than the Merseyside Special Branch. More than this, he was able to report in detail upon the travels of militant members of the seamen's union, where they had been, whom they had visited, at which flats they had stayed overnight and who had visited them there. It added up to a chilling James Bond scenario; or, if one was even moderately informed, to the normal lobbying accompanying any industrial dispute.

There was, however, one very curious episode within this drama, which is well to remember lest we fall into the error of assuming that 'the state' always operates as a well-oiled and synchronized ruling-class conspiracy. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Edward Heath, saw through Wilson's rhetoric, and thought that Wilson and Gunter had mishandled the situation and provoked the seamen into stubbornness. Knowing that there were no Communists on the seamen's executive, he pressed Wilson to disclose his evidence and substantiate his charges. Wilson complied by arranging for Heath a highly-secret meeting, 'on Privy Counsellor terms', to which meeting he brought not only the 'senior people responsible for these matters' but

also 'one of the operators "in the field"'. Despite all these remarkable favours, Heath, to his credit, remained unconvinced. But Wilson pursued his cloak-and-dagger script to the bitter end. Unprecedented measures were taken to split the seamen's executive, Wilson personally bullied their general secretary (giving him 'a sealed envelope' with information from the 'operators in the field') and the strike was smashed.

I have run through this narrative because, while it should be familiar, it is not: people have short memories, and official mythologies seek to make them shorter. We are rarely allowed as much information as to the operation of the state as we have in this episode, since few senior politicians have as large and as loose a mouth as Sir Harold Wilson. We will note only three points. The first is that it should not be assumed that Tories are always more active in their capitulation to the state within the state than Labour ministers. A certain kind of Labour politician may have a malice against 'militants' and, above all, a deeply-ingrained reflex of deference towards the 'real' guardians of British interests (whether in the Treasury or in the security services) which a certain kind of Tory — who meets these operators as class equals — need not always have.

Secondly, this episode illustrates not only how information is gathered upon subversives, but how it may be *put to use*. In 'normal' conditions of industrial and social peace, it is very rarely necessary for the 'operators in the field' to disclose their operations. And this leads to a certain complacency in the public. After all, if all that these people are doing is observing and invigilating us, but putting all this information to no use (unless against terrorists, spies, etc.), then let them have their fun — and let them have the most advanced, computerized data-bank as well. What harm is there in that? But the point about the seamen's strike is that it demonstrates that we remain safe from intervention, blackmail and state-suborned calumny only so long as we remain good and quiet. The state within the state only becomes, briefly, visible during a state of emergency; and a state of emergency is a moment when any group of people with economic or social power stand up vigorously for their own rights. When the immediate crisis is over, the pall of invisibility settles down once more.

Thirdly, I have recited this episode because, in its general outlines, it is now so familiar. The national crisis — the state of emergency — the deployment of armed forces — the attempts to induce panic on the national media — the identification of some out-group as a 'threat to security' — all these are becoming part of the *normal* repertoire of power. Of course, there are historical precedents for all these things; but never before, since 1816, has government been able to employ this repertoire without deeply and bitterly dividing the nation, and without inflaming the nerves of outrage and resistance in

a minority — a minority which, by patient agitation and political education, has often been able to influence the majority, and, in the long run, secure some reversal of the pretensions of power. What is new, in the last two decades, is the dulling of the nerve of resistance and of outrage. Familiarity has bred contempt — not contempt for the state and for the specious alarms and rationalizations of power, but contempt for any possible alternative. And in this moment a new danger appears. For once the libertarian responses of the British people have been brought under sedation, then the reasons for the invisibility of the state within the state begin to lose their force. And so we see the evidence, in the present decade, of the police, the army, the security services, the quasi-official and the pseudo-private agencies of control, becoming *more* public, engaging in active 'public relations', lobbying for new curbs on civil rights and for 'simplified' legal process and attempting to familiarize the public with their intrusive presence. And, in the face of this new danger, the ancient historical nerve begins to throb once more. State Research is one of the evidences of that.



A large part of the blame for the dulling of the nerve of outrage lies with the left itself. I do not make this as a wholesale accusation. There have been honourable centres of resistance, as in the long and dogged record of the National Council for Civil Liberties. We owe more than is often supposed to the vigilance of a few Labour and Liberal MPs, and even occasional questions from crusty Tory back-benchers. More recently, some journalists have been alerted to the dangers. And there are many others, among the splinters further to the left. But the resistance has been inadequate, and, if we are now faced with the need for a massive campaign of political re-education of the people, one reason is that Liberal, Labour, Communist and Marxist-intellectual opinion, has, for different reasons, never fought the earlier campaign with conviction.

The reasons for the capitulation of much *official* Liberal and Labour resistance have already been rehearsed. The episode of the breaking of the seamen's strike encapsulates them all. The uniformed — and sometimes actively-democratic — national consensus of the last war was protracted into a kind of populist celebration of the servants of the state. A former leader of the Young Communist League, Lord 'Ted' Willis, was the creator of that homely neighbour and universal uncle, 'Dixon of Dock Green' — the precursor of the somewhat-less-homely and more truthfully-observed heroes of 'Z Cars'. 'Positive vetting' in the public service was tightened up, as a 'non-party issue', during the panic of the high cold war, and confirmed in the aftermath of the cases of Philby, Vassal *et al.* The

bureaucratic statism towards which Labour politicians increasingly drifted carried with it a rhetoric in which the state, in *all* its aspects, was seen as a public good, a defence of working people, or of the little man, against private vested interests. The dividing line between the welfare state and the police state became obscure, and bureaucracy, in every form, waxed fat in this obscurity. Labour politicians were anxious to prove that they were fit to 'govern'; and they, quite as much as the Tories, habituated the public mind to the normality of these enlarged resources of government.

I will not delay over the Communist Party. No doubt its members have, here and there, fought sharp and significant skirmishes on behalf of their own or others' rights. But the Party's association, in the public mind and often in its own mind, with the obscene record of Soviet statism has weakened the credibility of any libertarian professions.

One would have supposed, in these circumstances, that the libertarian tradition would have migrated to that archipelago to the left of the official parties — new left, socialist sects and splinters, unorganized 'radicals', the women's movement, the movements of ethnic minorities, and so on. Fitfully this may have happened, and potentially it may yet prove to be so. But in fact no very coherent, impassioned or consistent agitation or education in civil rights or in libertarian traditions has come from this quarter. To diagnose this failure is to touch on sensitive issues and to provoke furious counter-polemics; but since I believe that 'the nerve of outrage' has always in our history been carried, in the first place, by minorities; and since I also believe that the failure of our present minorities to react with sufficient clarity and consistency to the present threats of statism constitutes a significant contributory element in that threat — that the ambivalence *within the 'left'* towards civil liberties is the most alarming evidence of all that the libertarian nerve has become dulled, and carries with it a premonition of defeat — then it becomes necessary to touch these sensitive points.

There has been around, for a decade or more, on the unofficial left a general rhetoric which passes itself off as a 'Marxism'. Sometimes this is expressed in sophisticated intellectual form, sometimes as an old-style Leninism, sometimes just as an unexamined vocabulary co-existing with other vocabularies. I will not address here the question as to whether this rhetoric is derivative from an authentic Marxist tradition or not; I have recently had my say on this at length elsewhere. But what are very often found, as common elements, in this rhetoric are some of the following: first, there is a platonic notion of the true, the ideal capitalist state, to which any actual case is only an approximation, but to which all cases must inevitably tend. This state is inherently profoundly authoritarian, as a direct organ of capitalist exploitation and control, and any inhibitions upon its

powers are seen as 'masks', or disguises, or as tricks to provide it with ideological legitimization and to enforce its hegemony. It may (but need not) follow that any symptoms of authoritarianism are seen as disclosing a 'crisis of hegemony', and they may even be welcomed as unmasking the 'true' (i.e. platonic) character of the state, and as signalling the 'conjuncture' in which a final class confrontation will take place. This may easily consort with a profoundly pessimistic determinism, in which that kind of authoritarian state can be seen as the necessary concomitant 'structure' of the 'capitalist formation'. And this may, and often does, consort with a loose rhetoric in which civil rights and democratic practices are discounted as camouflage, or as the relics of 'bourgeois liberalism'. And, to cut short the list, this very often goes along with a wholesale dismissal of *all* law and *all* police, and sometimes with a soppy notion that *all* crime is some kind of displaced revolutionary activity.

This is not the place to engage in a philosophical wrangle. I will simply say that, to a historian in a libertarian Marxist tradition, these are all half-truths which have a continual tendency to degenerate into rubbish, and, moreover, into rubbish which has a particular appeal to a certain kind of elitist bourgeois intellectual. If we survey advanced capitalist societies today, we may certainly find common tendencies at work, but we will find an immense variety of forms of state power, traditions of law and of civil rights, and of popular expectations and resistance. If we extend our overview, and scrutinize post-capitalist societies which have attained to a situation in which there is no law, no police and no crime, then our survey will come to an abrupt halt.

What is more to the point is that this rhetoric can be seen to unbend the springs of action, and to discount the importance of any struggle for civil rights. Pessimism is cherished, and then it is varnished over with revolutionary adjectives. If *all* law and *all* police are utterly abhorrent, then it cannot matter much what *kind* of law, of what *place* the police are held within; and yet the most immediate and consequent struggles to maintain liberty are, exactly, about kinds and places, cases and precedents, and the bringing of power to particular account.

If I may cite one case, I was first alerted to the extreme danger into which the left can be led by such rhetoric when I noted the pitiful absence of concern displayed towards the recent modification in jury procedure, which allows for a majority verdict. Very clearly, the powerful lobby behind that 'reform' was motivated by intense hostility to the jury system as such. Many of the police, and some judges and lawyers, saw the jury system as an antique survival and an impediment to more 'efficient' executive action, in which judges and magistrates themselves, or perhaps some kind of 'expert' trained assessors, should determine questions of guilt. Sir David McNee, in

his recent highly-publicized package of proposals to 'simplify' legal procedures and to facilitate the labours of the police, does not directly ask for the abolition of the jury. But it is not difficult to guess that this proposal will be in the next or the next-but-one package to come.

In the last few years I have sounded out friends of mine on the left about this question, and have met with some support. But I have met with more cynicism, and even with some abuse. I have been told (predictably) that the jury system is a relic of bourgeois liberalism, although it is in fact a very remarkable survival from a time when the bourgeoisie was not even a glint in feudalism's eye. I have been told that all juries (on *class* issues) are 'rigged', and this not as an occasion for outrage and reform, but as an inexorable fact of capitalist life. I have been told that juries make everything worse, by cementing the hegemony of the ruling class, and by legitimating its rule through co-opting the people into being the instruments of their own oppression. I have been told, most of all, that juries are middle-class, stupid, bigoted and racist, although I cannot see to what this argument tends, unless towards a revolutionary clerisy who govern the people in their true interests and in spite of the people's ineradicable false consciousness.

The trouble with all such arguments is that they presume to contrast sordid reality with some pure alternative which exists only in an intellectual's abstracted utopian noddle. As a historian, I am competent to put together a substantial list of bad verdicts by bigoted, confused or intimidated juries. I can also put together a much smaller list of good verdicts by independent-minded juries, a number of which were found in the full face of government pressure, and which were of critical significance in the defence or enlargement of the citizen's liberties. The jury system is not a product of 'bourgeois democracy' (to which it owes nothing) but a stubbornly-maintained democratic *practice*. It has never been a perfect practice; its practice can never have risen higher than the common sense and integrity of the jurors; but it has provided, repeatedly, a salutary inhibition — especially in matters of conscience and political behaviour — upon executive power. And, if we are to be purists, what other arrangement would revolutionaries propose? The notion of democracy as 'self-activity', as being — not the rule over the people by bureaucrats, 'experts', or a substitutionist vanguard — but the rotation among all ordinary citizens of public responsibilities and roles, would appear to be uncommonly well fulfilled in this curious survival, in which everyman or everywoman must take upon themselves the serious role of judgement of their peers. I can imagine better laws, and I can image better jurors, but I cannot imagine a better system. I would like to think of the jury system as a lingering paradigm of an alternative mode of participatory self-government, a

nucleus around which analogous modes might grow in our town halls, factories and streets.

The jury system will certainly not survive this century, unless 'the left' regains its libertarian memory. Those on the right who seek its end, or its savage delimitation into some segregated area of justice, do so on the grounds of its inconvenience: it is slow, costly, unpredictable, and (in the view of lawyers and police, but not of jurors) it gives rise to too many acquittals — and some of these 'bad' acquittals. Few on the right are far-sighted enough to envisage the situation in which the absence of a jury might deliver critical democratic rights into their hand. They share, rather, an impatience with messy, uncertain procedures, and a desire to 'rationalize' and 'modernize'. And they adduce no general theory of justice but hard-seeming, practical arguments. For example, some sectors of crime are now big business, and offenders command the wealth to suborn members of the jury.

It becomes important, then, to distinguish between genuine arguments — which, in their own terms, may have force — and the use of these arguments as pretexts to stampede the public into false conclusions. For we may be absolutely certain that no curbs will be proposed upon our democratic rights, and no extensions will be made in the resources of the organs of security, without our being offered 'practical' reasons and pretexts enough. Just now, the pretexts which will be flourished again and again will be two: the threat of terrorism and the increase in crime.

These both commence as genuine arguments, which are then taken over and manipulated by those who wish to employ them as pretexts to deliver us into authoritarian solutions. The left, and in particular the intellectual left, stands in need of greater clarity upon both problems. It is no good pretending that the state, or the 'capitalist formation', has *invented* or somehow engendered these problems, as an excuse for clapping the working class in irons.

Terrorism, kidnapping, bombing, etc, are abhorrent to me, as they are to most of the left. I am an old soldier, and consequently I was forcibly disabused before my twenty-first birthday of any notion that violence is more 'real' than other modes of dispute. Armed violence is the empire in which contingency and accident reign supreme. Of course, in conditions of extreme repression, democrats and socialists may be forced to take arms in self-defence or in a strategy of insurrection. And in such conditions they merit our solidarity. But where other measures of organization and agitation remain open, the recourse to terrorism is at best romantic, self-defeating and profoundly elitist (people who cannot be moved by arguments must be terrorized by guns), and at worst merely sick and villainous.

In terms of mere expediency, the matter is self-evident. Terrorist

organizations are notoriously easy to penetrate with agents and provocateurs (the Weathermen in the United States, the Naxalites). They are notorious also for their savage sectarian internecine warfare (Provisional and Official IRA, the present Palestinian disasters). They generally provoke both fear and hostility among the very people whom they are supposedly 'liberating'. (If any among the Baader-Meinhof gang or the Italian Red Brigade supposed that they were acting for the 'left', then they must know by now that they have driven ball after ball through the goal of their own side). Above all, they provide in superfluity the perfect pretexts for authoritarianism to rehearse its methods and to enlarge its repertoire.

This is clear enough to all, although some sections of the British left have been slow to see it, and, through misplaced notions of solidarity, have been slowest to see it in the case of the Provisional IRA. I will therefore allow myself to state what has long been obvious to most of the people of Eire as well as of Northern Ireland. The methods of the Provisionals constitute an absolute degeneration from the earlier civil rights movement. Provisional terrorism, and its Loyalist counterpart, are a symptom of the present malaise and point towards no kind of solution. And, whatever aggravations have been afforded by British policies and by the British military presence, the source of the malaise is not only to be found in 'British imperialism' ('Britain's back-yard Vietnam') but also in a historic conflict within Ireland itself, and *within the Irish working class*. In such circumstances, the duties of internationalism should be met, not by giving equivocal rhetorical support, from positions of English safety, to the Provisionals, but by throwing our arguments, and if need be our bodies, in between.

Not all readers will agree with me — although I find that many Irish friends do. But we may agree that terrorism in Northern Ireland — and its sporadic threat in English cities — provides a superb training-ground for the security services, as well as pretexts in abundance. I hope we may also agree that abstract intellectualist apologetics on behalf of such outfits as the Red Brigades utterly discredit the left in its struggle for libertarian objectives.

It now seems that hijacking, kidnapping, and terrorism are among the permanent benefits of modernization; in one form or another, we are likely to continue to experience episodes of these in coming decades, if only because the sufferings of the most exploited parts of the former colonial world are now being re-exported back to the imperial powers. And it is futile to pretend that this will *not* present an argument for greater security — the security of particular threatened persons, the security of aircraft, on occasion the security of the underground and of the public house. Are we really to suppose that any state would do nothing? So that the struggle to contain the security forces — to keep them in a place appropriate to the actual

threat, and to resist the transformation of real arguments into pretexts — will become increasingly complex and close. Just as those who, like myself, find the methods of the Provisionals abhorrent, must also support unreservedly the vigilant scrutiny which State Research keeps upon the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and the growing employment of its powers of detention and exclusion, so we must equally station ourselves to watch every twist and turn in the coming game. A blanket denunciation of all law and all police will do no good at all, since both will continue undisturbed, and a great part of the public will support them, saying: 'Well, *something* has got to be done.' So that exactly *what* is done becomes of prime importance: screening of all air passengers, *yes*: introduction of identity cards, *no*: collaboration with the Iranian security forces in the shadowing of Iranian students, *no*: data-banks on all citizens, spies in our unions and universities, *NO!*

Spies, data-banks, identity cards, more expeditious legal procedures — no doubt all these things would make the legitimate work of security easier. It would also open the door to every kind of illegitimate work as well. So that the maximum efficiency of operation of legitimate security (or crime-prevention) can never be accepted as the supreme priority. Civil rights will always place obstructions in the way of speedy executive action, and they should do so. The policing of Britain has been, and should continue to be, a difficult and ungrateful operation. But what about the other half-argument, half-pretext, the growth in crime?

Here, also, the left must clear up its mind. In secure and secluded places, some marvellously abstract notions are afloat. It might even be supposed that the increase in crime was wholly fictional, a pretext orchestrated by the media to legitimate ruling-class and racist measures, or was of interest only as a symptom of the crisis of the 'capitalist formulation' in this 'overdetermined conjuncture'. But whatever conclusions are reached as to the actual increment of offences; whatever diagnosis is made as to the social and economic predicament of offenders; whatever objections are upheld against the punitive ('exemplary') measures of the courts — there remains an objective record of suffering, loss and fear. For example, even if women are more ready to report rape and sexual assault than before, hence giving an artificial inflation to the number of recorded offences, it does appear that there are parts of our cities in which women are afraid to walk alone, when they were not afraid before. And if this is so, then it is an intolerable offence against civilized life and personal liberty. 'Something must be done', and that something must be deep and extensive, and involve the active cooperation of all citizens, male and female. Meanwhile, in the short run, something must be done with the aid of the protection afforded by law. I do not suppose that the matter will be set right by a few 'exemplary'

sentences. But, equally, I do not suppose that it will be improved without the aid of the police.

Each one of us, who has not lived an utterly retired life, can offer examples. But there are some who refuse to acknowledge the obvious. It is apparent from some recent pronouncements that there are exalted theorists who suppose that cat's eyes are placed in the roads by fairies, that missing persons materialize of their own accord, and that the police are nothing but an organ of the state with the function of repressing the proletariat. That the police are called upon to fulfil this function, on occasions, is manifest; but, once again, we are being offered a plausible half-truth on its way to degenerating into implausible rubbish.

The police are daily subject to the pressures of the most conservative ('law and order') ideology; those special sections of the force which are particularly trained in crowd control and in security operations (such as the Special Branch) have, notoriously, in the past been found to be permeated by extreme rightist, or fascist — and today, perhaps, National Front or racist — ideas and connections; and the means of democratic control over the police are wholly inadequate. But this has never been the whole story. In any known society, some of the functions of the police are as necessary and legitimate as those of firemen and of ambulance-men; and these legitimate functions include not only helping old ladies across the road (which I do not often notice them doing today) but enforcing the law and protecting citizens against offenders. In these respects, as the socialist pioneers always insisted, the police are in a particularly ambiguous social space: they are not only called upon, on occasion, *against* the action of the working class, they are also, like firemen and ambulance-men, a section of the working class. As such, they are open to organization, argument and persuasion; and historians can point to many successful examples of this taking place. On many occasions over the past thirty years, as I have shambled along in some street demonstration, I have fallen into conversation with the policeman shambling at our side — not, of course, the 'special' or the mounted 'officer' (these always behave like pigs), but the member of a local force drafted in for extra, Sunday duties. And after the first grumpy exchanges, when the policeman complains at the duty when he wanted to dig his back garden, I have often found my companion to be seriously interested in the issues of the march — nuclear disarmament, or the Vietnam war, or even racialism itself.

That is a sentimental picture. Grunwick showed the police in a less endearing light. But a wholly-indiscriminate attitude of 'bash the fuzzer' is very much more sentimental, more self-indulgent and counter-productive. It is not only that, with the modern repertoires of crowd control, the crowd will nearly always get the worst of the bashing. Nor is it even that such infantile emoting must drive the

police directly into the rightist ideology of which they are accused, in one single self-fulfilling motion. It is even more that if we are wholly serious in our libertarian intentions — if we mean to keep the British police unarmed, to limit them to legitimate activities in a legitimate place and to enforce upon them democratic controls — then we must fairly acknowledge that some part of their work is both proper and difficult, that the controls which we seek to place upon them will certainly add to the difficulties in the way of smooth ‘executive’ action, and that the police are entitled to expect, in return, some assistance from citizens in their legitimate business.

These proposals will not meet with universal acceptance. I may wish to revise my judgement, in this or that particular, in the future. At a certain point, a police state can pass a point of no return, when such considerations become irrelevant. But I do not think that we have got close to passing that point in Britain yet, and this is why the libertarian left must clear up its mind on the issues. For we can be absolutely certain that, in the next few years, each and every attempt to limit our liberties will be supported by plausible pretexts: the growth of violent crime, the threat of terrorism. If journalists and others find it necessary to disclose, in the public interest, ‘official secrets’ as to the invigilation of citizens, then we will *always* be told that the disclosure of these secrets will give aid to the Provisional IRA or to desperate criminals; and since the true state of affairs will remain an ‘official secret’ beyond public enquiry, it will always be impossible to disprove the prosecution case. One natural reaction then will be to denounce all pretexts in advance, to abuse the police and the law without discrimination, and to discount both crime and terrorism as if they did not exist. But the public will not accept those arguments. And then libertarians will be driven into a small and ineffectual minority.

It will now seem to some readers that I have been trapped in the double-bind against which I have myself given warning. What, indeed, can we do? One answer, which itself can become a double-bind of a different kind, is to reform the law. This is certainly important. It is especially important in the struggle to reform negative and punitive laws. The struggle to dismantle the provisions of the Official Secrets Act (section 1 quite as much as section 2) is important, not only in its own right, but because of the public airing which it gives to the issues and the education of the public mind.

It is equally important to struggle to bring the police under much stricter democratic controls, and to strip the security services of their invisibility. And it is of the utmost importance to fight such individual cases as may arise, and to give them all possible publicity. A historian knows that the governed can very rarely manufacture cases exactly to their own requirements — the governors are in charge of that. But it is, exactly, around particular cases that the public

consciousness becomes alerted, and that the motives and methods of the governors become disclosed. That is why the cases of Agee and Hosenball, and of Aubrey, Berry and Campbell, are of first significance, and concern us all.

Beyond this, and as part of the campaign to educate the public, there is a strong case for new affirmative laws. But this is where the other double-bind begins. I will leave aside the oddity of those who are against all law but who call for stronger laws against rapists and racialists: that is their problem. The difficulty is, first, that when any affirmative measure, such as a Freedom of Information Act, is being drafted, the entire invisible establishment of 'public servants' is alerted, and immense pains will be taken to offer some innocuous concessions (to journalists, etc) while at the same time actually strengthening the hard-core security provisions, which are then offered with a new legitimacy. This is exactly what is taking place inside the Government's White Paper on the Official Secrets Act. If we are alert enough, such manoeuvres may be spotted and exposed, but then the second difficulty arises. It has been admirably expressed by Mr Merlyn Rees himself, in the image of the 'self-sealing tank' (*The Times*, 20 July 1978). That is, if some Freedom of Information Act commands that there shall be public access to this and that category of document, then the state within the state will simply seal off this information in new ways: they will either assume, in their obscurity, the right to 'weed' the papers, or they will take care that certain decisions never appear in documents at all, or they will find an even more simple recourse. Thus the White Paper on the Official Secrets Act makes immense play upon the question of which categories of classified documents should come within its provisions — should these be 'top secret', or 'secret' or 'defence — confidential', or whatever? But of course, whatever decision is come to, this tank will be able to seal itself in the easiest possible way, by a simple motion of reclassification, in which all that top people do not wish the public to know is placed within the inviolable category.

We should certainly campaign for a Freedom of Information Act. The campaign will have educative value. It might secure small gains, and, for historians, significant ones. But we should be under no illusions about it; whatever act is passed, our public servants will find a way around it. And they will probably find a way more effective than that of their cousins in the New York FBI who, several years ago, were caught red-handed in a succession of illegal break-ins into the offices of a small socialist party in New York. Pursuant to a court order (which, in this country, it would have been impossible to get) the party's legal representatives were authorized to inspect the relevant FBI files; here nothing as to their agents' activities was to be found, until, upon a renewed search, the representative chanced upon the letter 'N'. And here he found a very fat file indeed, complete with all

the names and addresses of the party's members, tidily put away under the suffix 'Not to be Filed'.

We seem to be reaching pessimistic conclusions. But this need not be so. For there are certain other factors which may be working on our side. One of these I can only describe as a very ancient cultural tradition in Britain of bloody-mindedness towards the intrusion of authority. It has been there for as long as my knowledge extends. In the seventeenth century popular hostility to the apparatus of the summoner, the apparitor and the moral inquisitors of the Church courts was a contributory factor leading to civil war. Agents of the Society for the Reformation of Manners or intrusive excise inspectors were often targets of the crowd's ebullient resistance in the eighteenth century. I have already mentioned that public resistance to the 'modernization' of the police in Victorian England was immense. Again and again, in an unbroken series of cases, public opinion has eventually come to the side of the rights of the individual against the over-mighty state.

And this is the main point which I have been making all along: we have to renew the nerve of outrage and we have to alert the public conscience. For ways of doing this we may turn to our history for many precedents. One way has been to break the law. This was the way of Lollards and of Levellers, of heretics and Puritans; it was the way of Wilkes and the printers; it was the way of Daniel Isaac Eaton (seven times in the dock) and of Richard Carlile (for whom prison became an editorial office), in their fight to publish the works of Paine; it was the way of Henry Hetherington, and of the hundreds who took part in the fight of the 'great unstamped': it was the way of the suffragettes. Whenever the governors of Britain have assumed to know better than the British people what it was in their 'best interests' to believe, to read and to know, one proper response has been to defy the law.

I am suggesting that we can never know (since that will be an 'official secret') when the security forces and the police are engaged in legitimate or illegitimate business. But there are plain indications that much of their business is now illegitimate, and that this is enlarging. We must therefore educate the public conscience to the point where, on every side, their spies are surrounded by our 'spies'. If a copy-typist or a filing clerk falls upon offensive material, if a university assistant registrar or a civil servant knows that illegitimate invigilation is taking place, then this information must be 'blown'. What is legitimate and what is illegitimate will always be a difficult question; but I am saying that increasingly British people must become jurors in their own case. And, as public concern and understanding enlarges, we may hope that at least a few of the 'public servants' and 'operators in the field' will recollect their larger civil duties, as has happened in honourable cases in the United

States. We need only one good 'blow' from this quarter, and it will become at once more easy to estimate the problem, and to reconstruct the operation of the state within the state.

This course will not be easy. If successful, it will not extinguish the danger; but it will make the operators more guilty, more secretive, more cautious, and this is one way of containing them and of keeping them in their place. I think it utopian to expect much more. Indeed, I think this would be a notable victory, since it would mean that we had checked the immediate tendency for matters to grow worse.

If the secrets of power are 'blown', then fellow-citizens will be exposed to danger. The British security services will react more vengefully than their American counter-parts to any attempt to disclose their operations. They will defend ferociously their invisibility and lack of accountability; and their peculiar style of ruling-class arrogance will leave them genuinely horror-struck at the bare notion that a British citizen might have his or her own view of the 'national interest' and find their actions illegitimate. Home Secretaries will loyally lisp through the briefs that their masters give them. Judges will hurry to the side of the state. A section of the press will slaver after 'exemplary' sentences. This means that, if we support the right to public information, we must be very serious indeed about coming to the defence of those who may expose themselves in this cause.

Nor will difficulties end there. We cannot automatically support every case. We do not want to provide cover for some mercenary spook. And it is possible that provocateurs may seek to 'plant' supposedly-secret papers upon some journalist, in the attempt to provide a distraction. And even the 'good' cases may have their own wrinkles. We may need to defend — and I am certainly not referring now to any case which may be before the public eye — cranks, or egotists or fanatic sectarians, who kick us in the face when we offer them a shoulder, or who seek to enlist us in a sectarian cause of their own. But *there is nothing new about this*. 'History' has never offered to libertarians perfect cases, nor permitted those with nice palates to reject all food that has not been prepared by their own hands. We have to decide where principle lies. And then we have to defend that principle without reserve.

BLOOD ON THE STREETS

charts the violence in London's East End against the Bengalee community.

Prepared by Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council and available from 58 Watney Street, London E1. (01-790 8342).
£1.20 (including postage)

Black psyches in captivity and crises

Ever since Portuguese and Spanish seafarers crossed the Straits of Gibraltar in 1415, western Europe has encroached on Africa in a bloody search for agricultural products, mineral resources, overseas markets and, of course, slaves.[1] To rule without responsibility, to influence without reciprocity and to exploit ruthlessly with impunity have since become the hallmark of that European encroachment. The slave-trade and the importation of fire-arms began to dislocate the original African mode of production. Destructive wars and political upheavals set in on an unprecedented scale as Africans caught and sold other Africans. A vicious mentality and a readiness 'to sell others before being sold', 'to skin others before being skinned', became internalized and institutionalized. The slave-trade also gave birth to a class of greedy middlemen called *factors*. The factors were slave dealers who sold captured Africans – the historical prototypes of today's black intelligentsia.

By 1900 the industrial powers of Europe had virtually conquered and divided up the entire African continent. As colonialism became entrenched, a new cadre of factors emerged, firstly among the sons of collaborating chiefs and petty 'domestics', and later among half-literate African *fonctionnaires*. In plantation terminology these were the 'house niggers' who, in intimate quarters, served the master and, by so doing, stood apart from the masses of 'field niggers'. As colonialism followed its course of evolution, the violence on which it was nurtured became more sophisticated and more insidious. And

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missionary and government schools gradually began to provide more refined contexts for the creation and proliferation of indigenous factors. As early as 1871 Edward Blyden, the pioneering black educator, was shocked by the intellectual and moral degeneracy of western-educated Africans, and concluded that European education was subjecting Africans to a slavery 'far more subversive of the real welfare of the race than the ancient physical fetters'.[2]

Indeed, nowhere is the significance of western education in creating a cadre of new factors better explained than by M. Brevie, the Governor-General of former French West Africa. For he declared in a secret document that:

The duties of colonialism and political and economic necessities have imposed a twofold task on our work in education. On the one hand, we must train indigenous cadres to become our auxiliaries in every area, and assure ourselves of a meticulously chosen élite. We must also educate the masses, to bring them closer to us and to transform their way of living ...

From the political standpoint we must make known to the people our intention of bringing them into the French way of life ... From the economic viewpoint we must train the producers and consumers of tomorrow.[3]

It was in fact the same Brevie who wrote: 'the content of our school program is not a pedagogical affair. The pupil is an instrument of indigenous politics'.[4]

History has more or less confirmed the success of these colonialist intentions. An indigenous cadre of 'auxiliaries' has since developed. From an economic viewpoint, they have become the hoarding consumers, if not the efficient producers, for which they were long ordained. From a political standpoint, Europe and its American diaspora found a cadre of loyal 'auxiliaries' who to this day perpetuate oppressive structures and manipulate the African masses. From a psychological viewpoint, using the defence mechanism of 'identification with the aggressor', this cadre has readily internalized the oppressor's ideas, values and social behaviour. A psychological atrophy and absence of creativity became the hallmark of these auxiliaries. Everywhere we turn in the black world — in Africa as in the Caribbean, in North America as in Brazil — we find the same cadre of auxiliaries. And, as Fanon had long discerned, the mission of these auxiliaries 'has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and capitalism ... which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism'.[5]

CULTURE, IDENTITY AND THE BLACK INTELLIGENTSIA

The phenomenon of neo-colonialism would indeed find no realization without the presence of two necessary conditions: (1) the formation of an intelligentsia born amidst the oppressed but bound in a symbiotic class relation with the oppressor, and (2) the gradual peripheralization if not the total destruction of the indigenous culture as a world hegemony of Euro-American cultures is imposed.

Much has of course been said and written about the economic and political dimensions of oppression. But the underlying psychological dynamics have suffered relative neglect. This state of affairs has often resulted in certain undialectical and vulgar materialist conceptions. A more holistic outlook can be developed if the subjective factors of history are given equal consideration. Man is as much the subject as the object of the economic and ideological structures of his society. His psychic structure not only reflects both domains of social reality but in it are also embedded the very contradictions existing between these two domains.[6]

In particular, the psychic structure of the modern factor is conflict-laden since his material and social reality are shot through with antagonistic contradictions. Cut off from his indigenous mode of production and culture, alienated from his original social nexus and group reference, the contemporary black factor identifies with the oppressor and adopts his predatory practices. If in the past his predecessors sold others for fear of being sold or skinned them for fear of being skinned, the modern factor sells and skins others because he is programmed to do the same, but with greater self-deception. The process of internalization, better still the process of 'epidermalization', as Fanon referred to it, thus gains particular significance in the psychology of the modern factor.

A. Sivanandan has characterized the contemporary factor with unmistakable clarity and accuracy:

On the margin of European culture, and alienated from his own, the 'coloured' intellectual is an artefact of colonial history, marginal man par excellence. He is a creature of two worlds, and of none. Thrown up by a specific history, he remains stranded on its shores even as it recedes; and what he comes into is not so much a twilight world, as a world of false shadows and false light.

At the height of colonial rule, he is the servitor of those in power, offering up his people in return for crumbs of privilege; at its end, he turns servant of the people, negotiating their independence even as he attains to power.[7]

Clearly, the process of embedding the psychic structure of the modern factor cannot be sufficiently appreciated without a grasp of

the meanings of *culture* and *identity* — two crucial instruments of human domination and resistance.

By *culture* we mean the totality of a group's collective experiences that has distilled during its continual struggles in given eco- and bio-systems. More specifically, culture is the dynamic synthesis of a community's knowledge, beliefs, values and norms which express and derive from the contradictions existing, on the one hand, between man and nature and, on the other, among groups of individuals. As Amilcar Cabral pointed out:

culture is an essential element in the history of a people. Culture is, perhaps, the product of this history just as the flower is the product of a plant. Like history, or because it is history, culture has its material base at the level of the productive forces and the mode of production.[8]

The common man may associate culture only with the 'refined' dances, music and arts of the ruling classes; the academician may define it so pedantically, so abstractly or so metaphysically that his definition of culture loses organic link to the daily travails and aspirations of the living; the anthropologist may paternalistically present culture in terms of exotic rituals and the artifacts of remote 'natives' in Africa, Asia or the Pacific Islands. But Goebbels, the brain behind Nazi propaganda, had clearly grasped the paramount significance of culture as a factor of resistance as well as of domination. His understanding of it was such that, almost instinctively, he used to pull out his revolver whenever he heard a discussion of culture.

By *identity* we mean more than the individual's sense of being a specific person. Contrary to prevailing orientations in psychology, we use the concept of identity to refer to a dynamic process, conscious or unconscious, which has meaning only in the framework of culture. As such, identity is at once the affirmation and denial of certain attributes defining the individual in relation to others at any point during his development. The ontological insularity attributed to identity by some psychologists is a myth exonerating the atomistic and alienated outlook engendered by capitalism. Identity, which is a process of *becoming*, begins in a familial nucleus, thus within a concrete interpersonal context. This process of becoming is then directly cast into a wider social dialectic whose changing contradictions provide bases for further differentiation from and bond with others.

Thus, if culture is the essential element in the history of a people, identity is the embodiment of that culture and history in a given bio-system. In this sense, identity is the concrete crystallization of both sociological and biological factors in a unified entity; this entity is never constant because the sociological and biological factors which define it are always in flux. If culture has its material base at the level

of the productive forces and the mode of production, identity finds concrete expression only through praxis — i.e., goal-directed activities in a world man transforms and is in turn transformed by. Goebbels' habit of reaching for his gun whenever he heard a discussion of culture was not therefore an expression of a desire to dominate man in the abstract; it was instead the behavioural response of a determination to annihilate specific identities, to destroy man the subject, the better to mould him in the Nazi image.

Cabral once pointed out that 'the principal characteristic, common to every kind of imperialist domination, is the negation of the *historical* process of the dominated people'. [9] He also aptly concluded: 'the moment imperialism arrived [in Africa], it made us leave our history and enter another history' — i.e., a European history. [10] Forcing us to leave our history and adjust to what is alien, it also made the natural processes of psychological development unnecessarily tortuous and taxing for the colonized. The question of how an oppressed people *betray, reclaim* or *make* their own history is thus for us of crucial psychosocial significance.

THE AFRICAN STUDENT — FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTRE

In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power ... This is the period of unqualified assimilation.

In the second phase we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is ... But since the native [intellectual] is not part of his people, since he only has exterior relations with his people, he is content to recall their life only. Past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought out of the depth of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of borrowed estheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies.

Finally, in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the [traditional] people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people. Instead of according the people's lethargy an honored place in his esteem he turns himself into an awakener of the people. [11]

The network of object-relations, the nature of identifications and content of internalized values that the schooled African grows up with early in life are predominantly those of tradition. [12] Superimposed and later concurrent with these traditional influences are those of western education which, of course, aims toward the internalization of western culture. The content, methods and, sometimes, agents of western education are still subtly or blatantly racist,

even during the post-independence years. Though not so far organically integrated with the dominant social realities of the African masses, western education has nevertheless made significant inroads into the character structure and cognitive development even of those who have had the slightest contact with it.

Greenfield and Bruner, after extensive cross-cultural research, came to the following conclusion:

Wolof children [of Senegal] who have gone to school are more different intellectually from unschooled children living in the same bush village than they are from schooled city children living in the same country or from Mexico City, Anchorage, Alaska, or Brookline, Massachusetts.[13]

Interestingly, none of these Wolof children had even reached their teens at the time of the study, and yet the early effects of western education were so drastic that they had already created a gulf in thinking between Wolof children of the same village while, ironically, bridging cognitive differences between schooled Wolof children and their white peers thousands of miles away!

The schooled African gradually widens the gulf between him and his own people while he bridges his original differences from the Euro-American. As he acquires more western education, over-rehearsal of an alien diction is combined with a drastic shift in outlook about his own people, his own culture and his identity. As he increasingly capitulates, he hungers for the prestige and self-actualization implied by the prospects of visiting countries like England, France and the United States. For to go to the land of the (neo-) colonizer is to him a pilgrimage from the periphery to the centre from where power and enlightenment have long radiated to far-off 'dark' corners of the world. Once abroad, however, he sooner or later experiences a rude awakening.

Armah, the Ghanaian novelist, illustrated a particular feature of that rude awakening:

Leaving home for school, always. The search for knowledge should not be synonymous with increasing alienation and loneliness. In our particular circumstance it is so. It has been planned that way.

Knowledge about the world we live in is the property of the alien because the alien has conquered us. The thirst for knowledge therefore becomes perverted into the desire for getting close to the alien, getting out of the self. Result: loneliness as a way of life.

This loneliness is an inevitable part of the assimilationist African's life within the imperial structure. Because of the way information is distributed in the total structure — high information in the center, low information on the peripheries — overall clarity is potentially possible only from the central heights. The structures

in the peripheral areas are meant to dispense low, negative or mystificatory information.

The choices are clear. Those who stay in the peripheral areas intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, totally are not lonely. They are in touch with home, not cut off. The price they pay for not being lonely, however, is that they suffer the crudest forms of manipulation, mystification, planned ignorance.

Those who shift from the periphery to the center can hope to escape some of the cruder forms of manipulation. But the price they pay is loneliness, separation from home, the constant necessity to adjust to what is alien, eccentric to the self. All this is in the present structuring of the machinery for acquiring knowledge, not in the essential nature of the learning process itself.[14]

Some may mistake Armah's critique of western education for an essentially anti-intellectualist, anti-educational posture. What Armah indicts, however, is not the process of acquiring genuine knowledge per se but rather the phenomenological meaning and social consequences of western education for the oppressed. The following cases of African students, not so atypical in these days, may well illustrate the point.

Case no 1

Mr X is a very intelligent, amicable and polite young African who comes from a well-known and highly-respected family. The oldest child in the family, X was a sociable and model student who promised a bright future. Following the successful completion of elementary school, X left home at the age of 14 for the provincial capital, some sixty miles away, in order to attend the secondary school nearest his home town.

Separation from home at this tender age and the unaccustomed need to manage all on his own was seen as necessary sacrifice for future membership in the numerically small but highly prestigious educated elite. Following completion of secondary school, our enthusiastic young African student ventured even further, this time enrolling into the country's university college located nearly 500 miles away from his home town. His freshman year at the university was one of hardship and disappointment, however. He soon left the country, embarking on a two-year journey and making a daring pitch at a long-coveted destination: the United States. After two odd years of travelling in the Middle East and Europe, running into tortuous visa and financial problems, he finally arrived in the United States on a tourist visa.

Upon arrival in one of the large eastern cities, he enrolled into a state college and soon petitioned for a change of status from tourist

to student visa. The petition was denied. He decided to stay on illegally anyway. But haunted by the prospect of being caught and deported, he transferred to a college in another state. Gradually, however, the isolated life in the small college town began to take its toll. Personal resiliences of the past diminished with the painful realization that all was not a bed of roses in the United States. Cut off from home, bombarded daily with racist remarks and stares in the small college town, X sought support and respite in frequent visits to compatriots in other states.

Such visits often helped a great deal but they in no way offered any lasting resolution to his heightening conflicts and loneliness. His consumption of alcohol increased. His personal hygiene deteriorated. His social intercourse declined. His isolation and loneliness, aggravated by bad hygiene and drinking escapades, became overwhelming. In a summer visit to New York City, he would occasionally jump at the sight of any elderly black man, embrace him vigorously, and implore the shocked and baffled New Yorker with cries of: 'Father, don't leave me; please don't leave me alone!' Increasingly, he began to see danger all around him, running sometimes to police stations for protection. Fears of sorcery and traditional rituals to avert the malicious intent of others surfaced, in spite of his previous ridicule of such traditional beliefs as superstitious and marks of ignorance. Two commitments to psychiatric hospitals and the urgings of friends led to the decision to return home, at least to visit his family for a brief vacation. Relatives at home had to make contributions to cover his fare back to his home country.

Case no 2

Miss B, from a very well-to-do family, was born and brought up in a large African city. There was hardly a sign of urbanity which she failed to adopt as she blossomed into young adulthood. To dress according to the latest fashions of Europe and America, to accumulate avidly collections of 'soul music' and to win the reputation of a party-maker were the preoccupations she and others of her class and temperament hankered after. But her most consuming ambition was a visit to the United States.

Her formal pre-college schooling as well as informal social intercourse in the city had long inculcated in her the urge to travel away from the 'peripheries' of the world in which she was born to its very 'centre'. A visit to Europe or better still America meant to her a pilgrimage to the central heights of the world—for which no personal sacrifice, however trying, was too great. When common pretexts like studying abroad did not avail themselves to her, Miss B expediently married an American business employee much older

than herself. And neither reasoned advice nor vehement family objection dissuaded her.

Only when she and her husband arrived in the United States did a rude and painful awakening penetrate her superficial veneer and shake her by frightening degrees. The romantic dreams of setting foot in America at all costs soon vanished under the cold reality of being a marginal person with neither friends nor relatives to lend her support or consolation. Life as a suburban housewife quickly became too unbearable. Efforts to escape it by seeking out Africans of her age and taste caused much travelling inconvenience and, most of all, serious marital problems. Only pleasant memories of bygone days with friends and relatives were her companions against the monotony and barrenness of her new existence.

Gradually, her husband began to notice a disturbing change in her and in the quality of their relationship. What he did not know before, but which now slowly dawned on him, was the realization that his was a marriage of expediency! He was only an unwitting instrument in consummating a marriage between Miss B and America. The quality of their communication was fast deteriorating. What little free time he spared from busy company assignments was increasingly taken up by quarrels between them. Some of these quarrels were based on genuine cultural misunderstandings. Most, however, were the result of conflicting expectations of what brought them together in the first place.

Then came the day when his wife, alone in the house, made a desperate call to the fire department shouting: 'fire! fire! fire!' The police and firemen responded. But finding no fire and unable to contain her obviously excited state, the policemen took her to a mental hospital where she remained committed until her worried father, travelling all the way from Africa, arrived and took her back to her country. Her desperate calls for help and the consuming fire within her were culminations of an alienation long incubated in her.

Case no 3

Mr N is a man in his middle thirties from a West African country. He is married and has three children. Following the completion of his training at a local teacher training school, Mr N became a teacher and later the principal of a secondary school where he won the respect and admiration of his colleagues and students.

In the course of his four-year tenure as a principal, Mr N diligently saved money to study abroad. During the same period he sought and cultivated a friendship with an American couple in a nearby mission. They helped him get into a college in the United States — and the money he had saved and contributions from relatives enabled him to

travel there with his wife and youngest child. The two older children were left behind in the care of their grandparents.

Mr N and his wife left home with great anticipation. Soon after their arrival, however, they found themselves bombarded by a degree of racism they had never been prepared to encounter. True, Mr N had read and heard about racism in the US. But that was with the intellectual and partial understanding of a problem he had only read or heard about. Personal encounters with racism were more devastating. Too difficult to endure was the daily onslaught of racist stares and remarks the couple suffered while looking for an apartment, asking for directions or using public transport.

Initially, these encounters with racism, however painful, were interpreted as temporary inconveniences on the way to the higher educational ends for which Mr N had come to the US. But financial constraints soon interrupted his schooling and forced him to eke out a living in an already hostile environment. It was then that racism began to affect him in even more fundamental ways. He found no employment. In contrast, his wife was hired to work in a large department store.

This state of affairs soon brought about a reversal of roles and subsequently marital conflicts. Mr N now began to stay home more frequently taking care of the baby and doing the necessary chores. His previous self-image as the sole breadwinner of his family and a member of a select elite was brought into question by the new reality of unemployment and want. For his wife, however, this reversal of roles brought a new sense of power and freedom. Being the sole breadwinner, she began to assert herself in ways that were inconceivable in their sexually-regimented society.

Arguments between them became more and more frequent. Mr N's anxiety and suspiciousness increased. He began to level at his wife accusations of sexual disloyalty. On occasion violent physical fights punctuated their verbal harangues. It was in fact the harsh beatings he inflicted on his wife which subsequently prompted the court to order him to live away from his wife and child. But since he had nowhere else to stay, the court also arranged for him to live temporarily at a nearby Salvation Army station.

The failure to pursue his education and now the loss of his wife and child left him deeply angry and restless. Yet through some curious psychodynamic process, Mr N soon took upon himself the tasks of a zealous missionary. In messianic terms he started to preach to everyone he met about the decadence in America. He proclaimed himself the 'new Jesus' whose mission it was to save American souls wallowing in racial hatred, sexual perversity and moral degeneracy. The less he was listened to, the more he was convinced of his mission. Several violent attacks brought him again to court and finally led to his deportation.

The above three cases, though somewhat extreme, are by no means isolated instances. Similarly harrowing experiences abound among today's black intelligentsia. The search for western education, and thus apprenticeship to an ordained factorship, necessarily entails a degree of alienation. But the alienation experienced is not simply a consequence of the visit abroad. The visit abroad only intensifies the cultural and social alienation already endemic to a whole educational system elaborated by the Euro-American oppressor. Indeed, long before they have left their own countries, this educational system increasingly isolates the students from their original social nexus and cultural moorings. Armah explains the process thus:

The education process. Mine has been a series of jumps through increasingly narrow gates.

Elementary School. First gate, the millions already eliminated, leaving thousands. No justification. Just the way things are. The way things have been made.

Secondary School. Second gate. The thousands dropped, leaving hundreds. The justification: the exams. A lucky few get in because their relatives push them through in spite of everything.

Sixth Form. The hundreds forgotten. A dozen here, twenty there. Small groups getting absorbed deeper into European ways. The justification: a higher quality.

University. Single survivors in the last reaches of alienation. The justification: 'You are the only one'; 'You are not like the others', 'You are the first ...'

But it is these, the farthest removed from the living realities of the hundreds, the thousands, the millions, who are given the power in the imperial system to regulate the lives of the millions, thousands, hundreds.[15]

The process of developing a black intelligentsia is thus marked by a series of narrow gates cutting off the student from his original social foundation. Psychological integration and continuity become obviated by contradictory socialization processes. Belonging at once to two cultures and to none, the individual psyche bears indelible marks of different cultural tempos and conflicting ethos. Daily experiences and praxes under conscious control are accelerated to accommodate the demands of the Euro-American world. But the deeper recess of the psyche, namely the unconscious, lags behind, remaining submerged under the influences of childhood object-relations, old identifications and values of the indigenous community. However denied and ridiculed they may be at times of relative calm and personal capitulation, these unconscious remains of the indigenous society reappear in dreams and invariably assert their dominance in periods of psychoexistential crisis.

At the point when capitulation is predominant, when rude

awakening has not yet taken hold, compensatory mechanisms are ostentatiously exhibited, sometimes at great personal and social cost. The hoarding of consumer goods, winning the acceptance of and intimacy with whites, hankering for status with substance, denigration of the indigenous masses and the flaunting of personal power are all expressions of compensatory manoeuvres which in the end perpetuate the ordained factorship.

THE LEADER: BOTH VICTIM AND PREDATOR

Leaders of course influence and are influenced by others. They set the pace for their generation, provide models for the uninitiated and shape the norms governing the patterns of reward and punishment in a particular society. But these leaders also emerge out of a particular socio-historical context. Their public behaviour and ideological postures are not therefore merely idiosyncratic or accidental but are rather expressive of a certain societal or at least class ethos. Now when we examine the leaders ruling most African countries, we cannot help but confront certain nauseating phenomena whose generality extends beyond the continent. One finds among them the psychology of the black pimp ostentatiously riding his polished Cadillac in the poverty-stricken community of Boston and Harlem.

As recently as 5 December 1977 an African crowned himself emperor amidst much pomp and parades never before witnessed in his country. Preparations for this self-coronation took at least a year. Hand-picked staff were given the unenviable task of studying videotapes of last spring's Silver Jubilee Celebration of Queen Elizabeth II in an effort to duplicate the coronations of Napoleon and Charlemagne whom this African admires intensely. Buildings in the capital city were renovated, streets cleaned and renamed. Royal carriages, horses, air-conditioned Mercedes limousines and a host of other regal paraphernalia were imported from Europe. A crown and a sceptre were also designed by a Paris jeweller according to Napoleonic tastes. The crown, costing more than two million dollars, has 773 carats-worth of diamonds, emeralds and rubies. The sceptre, weighing ten pounds, is covered with 3,000 diamonds. In all, the two-day ceremony cost at least \$25 million, about a third of the annual budget of the country — now close to bankruptcy. This pompous coronation took place in the Central African Republic — a country with an average annual income of \$155 and with a population that is now feared to face massive starvation. Yet the demented psychology of their leader, Emperor Bokassa I, a career colonial soldier who fought in three wars on behalf of France, places greater priority on spending lavishly for his coronation than in averting the ravages of famine and disease among his people. He is said to defend the ceremony with the

remark that a people cannot make history without sacrifices. And as if he alone has royal immunity to contradiction, or simply out of total ignorance, he even calls himself a 'socialist emperor'.

But the exhibitionism of Bokassa, exaggerated and dramatic though it may be, is hardly an isolated phenomenon. President Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast is another example, expressing essentially the same underlying psychology. Emulating the French, he too built himself his own Versailles at the cost of four billion francs. Excellent public buildings have been destroyed in order to enlarge his park. 'For its construction, hundreds of tons of malachite were imported from Russia ... by air!'[16] Similarly, the mouthfilling titles of the Field Marshal, Doctor, Al Hajj Idi Amin Dada are expressions of a general malaise among the capitulated black bourgeoisie, the contemporary factors, whose ills Fanon had long diagnosed to be 'precocious senility'.

That many a Bokassa or an Idi Amin is now bleeding dry the millions previously controlled and manipulated by alien forces leads us to take stock of new dimensions of oppression. For if *colonialism* (i.e., direct control) has long been supplanted by *neo-colonialism* (i.e., remote control), we are now at the threshold of *auto-colonialism*. This is an era when the oppressed, willy-nilly, inflicts upon himself or on his own people the same old oppression even in the absence of the Euro-American predator. Auto-colonialism thus represents the highest stage of domination when the violence of the oppressor becomes internalized and institutionalized. The image and practices of the alien predator now find sufficient anchorage in the life and chemistry of the oppressed so that the victim himself becomes his own persecutor. This type of oppression no doubt has lethal effects akin to undetected cancer precisely because it reflects a stage when the victim and predator meet in the same person.

AUTO-COLONIALISM AND AUTO-DESTRUCTION

Auto-colonialism is actually the political expression of more general auto-destructive experiences observed in a situation of prolonged oppression. Paulo Freire called aspects of it 'horizontal violence' and explained it thus: 'the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the "order" which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalized. Chafing under restrictions of this order, they often manifest a type of horizontal violence, striking out at their own comrades for the pettiest reasons.'[17] Fanon too explained the auto-destructive consequences of pent-up anger in the context of low political consciousness:

The colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is

the period when the niggers beat each other up, and the police and magistrates do not know which way to turn when faced with the astonishing wave of crime... While the [white] settler or policeman has the right the lifelong day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native.[18]

Indeed we see the same misdirected aggression played out ad nauseam in most oppressed communities. For instance, a recent survey by Jenkins et al indicated that the Boston black community has the highest rate of homicide in the whole state of Massachusetts.[19] The incidence of overall mortality in this community is so high that it prompted the researchers to label this community as a 'zone of death'. Similar findings have also been reported for black communities in other parts of the United States. In an extensive study covering a period of almost two decades, Rushforth et al also found appalling rates of homicide among young black men in metropolitan Cleveland, Ohio.[20] Between 1958 and 1974, the largest absolute increase in the homicide rate was recorded for city black males of 25 to 29 years of age. During the same period, the national increase in homicide mortality among black men of 25 to 34 years was 80 per cent. These and other corroborating studies underscore the appalling degree of *intra*-racial aggression amongst oppressed black communities. The fact that most assailants of black victims are relatives, friends or acquaintances also emphasizes the extent to which auto-destruction pervades the most intimate aspects of social existence where capitulation and low political consciousness are dominant.

THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY

Historically, however, capitulation has always contained the seeds of its own negation. The very contradictions which have given rise to capitulating tendencies undermine its foundation. Sooner or later, the assimilated black person who fathoms the culture of the oppressor and observes him at close quarters realizes the marginal status he is doomed to within the Euro-American world. He becomes disturbed at the ego-dystonic nature of his capitulation. Yet the long-abandoned indigenous culture cannot be so readily summoned to undergird a faltering 'alien' identity. It is at such moments that he may find himself haunted by *namelessness* (Baldwin), *invisibility* (Ellison), *inaudibility* (Du Bois), *white masks* (Fanon) and other forms of depersonalization. A rude awakening of this nature, experienced alone or collectively, engenders the search for what Cabral called a

'return to the source'. It is then that one may discern efforts to establish secure anchorage by means of revitalization.

Whereas elitist rationalizations against the 'uneducated' classes were previously advanced to justify the status quo, division on the basis of race gains particular significance in revitalization. Social cleavages are thus reviewed in terms of race-conflict; rehabilitation, initially assumed to be attainable through assimilation, is now considered to be possible through black nationalism. Wearing of traditional garb, rummaging through antiquity to discover a glorious past, embracing traditional medicine with little reservation and romanticism of blackness and tradition become particularly attractive.

A dramatic illustration of the revitalization process is provided by a small black community in South Carolina, USA. Located between Charleston and the Georgia border, this community of black Americans tries to re-create all aspects of life in a traditional Yoruba village. In dress, life style and religious practices, all the residents dogmatically adhere to Yoruba culture. Each person has taken an African name and their village is called Oyotunji, with a sign in big letters informing the visitor that he is 'Entering Yoruba Kingdom'. There is no running water, no electricity, no plumbing. Women carry water jugs and firewood on their heads and mostly walk barefoot. Temples are scattered throughout the village. Gods are consulted and appeased with sacrifices. Priests look into the future, prescribe herbal medicine and sell love potions. In short, no ritual of a traditional Yoruba village life seems to have escaped the attention and practices of the residents of Oyotunji village. Indeed they seem, at least on the surface, more committed to preserve pre-colonial African traditions than today's rural African who, in general, has less hesitation in adapting to western commodities (e.g. dress) and technology (e.g. electricity).

Interestingly, the founder and guiding spirit of the community at Oyotunji is a former artist and dancer from Detroit. He has taken the name King Efuntola Osejeman Adefunmi I. Presiding over a 10-acre kingdom whose houses are made of plywood and corrugated tin, King Osejeman controls his kingdom as an absolute ruler. Polygamy is practiced in the village and the king himself has six wives, thirteen children and a 17-year-old fiancée. Each of his wives has her own house in the palace compound. There is even a separate place for the royal chicken — a fact underscoring the absurd lengths to which the King goes to exhibit his uniqueness. When asked why the inhabitants chose this manner of living, the king responded: 'The Black American must not only get back to his roots — he must see to it that he nourishes them and makes them grow.[21] Asked what his names mean, he explained that the name King Efuntola gives him priestly license while Osejeman and Adefunmi mean, respectively, 'saviour

of the people' and 'king of the white cloth who comes to destroy a king'. Efuntola adds: 'The king I have come to destroy is the decadent western world, led by the United States. This will take place when the gods decree.'[22]

Yet however extreme or bizarre life at Oyotunji village may seem, many converts of King Efuntola's movement are reported to exist in major American cities, including Philadelphia, New York, Detroit, Los Angeles, Savannah, Boston, Richmond, Gary and Washington, DC. For instance, it is reported that:

voodoo as religion practiced by U.S. blacks came out from the shadows and into broad daylight on a recent weekend on Philadelphia South Street when followers celebrated the Yoruba New Year ... Thousands of passersby gaped in stunned disbelief as sleek, graceful black worshippers adorned in colorful gowns, robes, dashikis and headdresses moved sensuously to pulsating drums in dances they hoped were pleasing to Elegba, the temperamental God of Destiny, and to dozens of other Yoruba gods.[23]

These city-converts, though usually wearing western-style clothing only at work, observe 'voodoo religious practices' and zealously adopt Yoruba language, food and culture in their homes and communities. They see these practices as 'spiritual attacks' against the dominant white culture and believe that self-rehabilitation is possible only through a total embracing of traditional African culture.

Of course, the process of revitalization does not always find such dramatic expression as in the village of Oyotunji. Nor does capitulation always manifest itself only in the leadership styles of men like Bokassa. These examples dramatize and underscore the psychosocial tendencies prevalent in a situation of prolonged oppression. Less dramatic expressions of these tendencies are frequently encountered. In general, the nature and intensity of the capitulation suffered defines the degree and nature of the revitalizing reaction. Sometimes, the desperate search for authenticity leads to sinister practices. Not too long ago, for instance, a violent variety of 'negritude' called 'Chaditude' was said to have found its local particularity in Chad. It was reported that:

the educated urbanized elite is being forced to take part in tribal initiation rites ... Teachers, clergymen, bankers, and businessmen are among those who are ... hauled off for six weeks or more into the bush, where they undergo beatings, burnings, scarrings, and other trials, supposedly to purge them of their Western ways. Refusal to take part may mean death.[24]

These sorts of practices, far from counteracting the negative influences of western education and domination, serve only to mystify the workings of imperialism and the process of social change. Exorcism

of alienated psyches through such violent means is of course nowhere close to a genuine return to authenticity and alienated history.

REVITALIZATION: A PRELUDE TO RADICALIZATION?

The process of revitalization in particular has been frequently misunderstood — a fact which has serious social repercussions, given the increasing appeal this pattern is gaining in many black communities. Revitalization as illustrated in the above examples is a transitional phase characterized by efforts to 'tear away' from Euro-American influences. As Fanon pointed out, 'this tearing away, painful and difficult though it may be, is however necessary. If it is not accomplished, there will be serious psycho-affective injuries and the result will be individuals without anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless — a race of angels.' [25] It is such reactive flaunting of cultural/racial identity which in fact helps undo some of the debilitating influences of capitulation and subsequently paves the way for radicalization.

Indeed, the process of revitalization has greater relevance for man in different epochs and historical circumstances. It underscores man's relations to his past. At the individual level, his unconscious is the repository of earlier object relations, old identifications and primordial images. Childhood experiences long repressed and at best given only disguised expression in dreams suddenly assert their unmistakable and frightening dominance at times of personal crisis. The black intelligentsia is of course by no means immune to this human predisposition. The tradition that not too long ago was ridiculed as mark of ignorance, the indigenous masses who recently were despised, the *sihir* or *juju* conveniently dismissed for being unscientific, the customary prayers readily shunned as worthless rituals — all these and more suddenly take on paramount significance and immediacy when the encounter with the present becomes too unbearable to live through and the future appears too grim to promise a comforting refuge.

At the collective level, the past also reveals equal resilience, particularly during periods of social upheaval. The forces of regression as well as of progress invoke it in various ways, but frequently as an instrument of rationalization. Even during a revolutionary epoch, the past looms large because:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations

weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from their names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.[26]

The blacks who gain consciousness of their ordained factorship find that somehow they have to come to terms not only with a personal past but also a collective past tainted with scars left by alien forces. Slavery obliterated the culture of blacks in the diaspora. Colonialism and its camouflaged derivatives ossified the African's culture; it suppressed much of the dynamic, liberating force of culture while leaving intact those inert and regressive aspects it deemed harmless or amenable to its own logic of manipulation and mystification.

Capitulation entails relegation to objecthood. This only breeds self-estrangement, alienation and auto-destruction. Factorship entrenches the black intelligentsia into capitulation and objecthood. Revitalization marks a painful stage of re-evaluation and re-discovery. Associated with it are categorical repudiations of an oppressive present and vehement affirmations of a romanticized past. This is a reactive stage and perhaps a necessary prelude for the emergence of individuation and autonomy. Of course, neither the past nor the present is immutable. Genuine rehabilitation and social reconstruction come about only with the critical appraisals and transformative praxes of *radicalization* — a process of understanding and changing the *root-causes* of social reality. Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral, who exemplify the spirit and practice of radicalization, acted on this conviction:

I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there the meaning of my destiny.

I should constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists in introducing invention into existence.[27]

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New forms of capitalist state in Latin America: an exploration

In a recent article I undertook a systematic critique of those theories which characterize as 'fascist' the variety of military dictatorships now existing in Latin America. I instead advocated concrete, empirical, studies of the new forms of political domination prevailing in the area.[1] This is not the place to reproduce the whole argument, although the presentation of its main guidelines will help to clarify the subsequent discussion of the state in contemporary dependent capitalism.

My aim was to re-establish the historical and structural uniqueness which characterized the formation of the European fascist states in the years between the First and Second World Wars. I therefore proceeded to 'situate' the national political crises which shook the European countries in the aftermath of the First World War within the broader framework both of the evolution of the productive forces in each nation and of the constitution of the world market. Fascism was then understood as one of the several possible forms of counter-revolutionary solution to the political crisis. The fascist state could only be rightly interpreted if the particular conditions of capitalist development in some European countries and the insertion of their respective bourgeoisies within the world market were properly analysed. Without this reference to the material base of fascism it is impossible either to explain the variety of reactionary responses during the inter-war years or to understand the reasons why only in

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Italy and Germany the counter-revolution acquired the unique and distinctive traits of the fascist state.[2] In other countries the authoritarian response gave place to regressive Bonapartist regimes (in Gramsci's conceptualization) or, simply to the rise of military dictatorships which, using a variety of methods, put an end to political crises and curbed the revolutionary offensive of the popular masses.

It is therefore impossible to talk about fascism without referring to imperialism: the former is nothing but the specific form through which a recently constituted national bourgeoisie tried to solve a general national crisis during the 'classic' phase of imperialism that elapsed between the two World Wars. If the contradictions unleashed by the peculiarities of capitalist development in a given country are not integrated into the theory of fascism, the study of the latter degenerates into mere denunciation. This is entirely justifiable in moral terms, but is hopelessly sterile and highly misleading in terms of a concrete political practice. The determining factors rooted in the historical and structural matrix which made possible the development of capitalism in several European and Latin American nations thus disappear from the political analysis. In the heat of denouncing fascism, we overlook some of the most critical problems that characterize a nation's capitalist development, such as the forms of insertion into the world market, forms of constitution of the proletariat, the extent and immensity of the agrarian problem and its bourgeois resolution, the fragmentation of the bourgeoisie and the peculiarities underlying the formation of the national state. The consequences of this separation of the economic determinants (and the multitude of social, political and ideological mediations that filter and overdetermine the influence of these) from a particular form of capitalist state, such as the fascist one, are extremely unfortunate. One arrives at an abstract conception of fascism as a purely terrorist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The conclusion that follows is then as naive as it is simplistic: where there is terror, there is fascism; if, on the contrary, the repressive violence of the dominant classes operates within the bounds of bourgeois 'legality', then the regime is a bourgeois democracy.

It is not therefore surprising to find an abundance of articles and books in which forms of state as diverse as those exemplified by the dictatorships of Somoza in Nicaragua, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Stroessner in Paraguay, Duvalier in Haiti, the Bonapartist regimes of Vargas and Peron in Brazil and Argentine and the current military dictatorships of the southern cone of Latin America, are all lumped together as 'fascist'. In the face of such gross oversimplification one cannot but question the validity of a concept that is so broadly defined that it is able to include a collection of political regimes and forms of state as varied as those mentioned above. If, as

Lenin said, marxism is the concrete analysis of a concrete situation, what are the advantages of using a category like fascism to identify the essential nature of the new forms of domination in Latin America? Palmiro Togliatti addressed himself to this question in 1928, and his answer, after half a century, is still relevant.

First of all I want to examine the error of generalization that is ordinarily committed when people use the term 'fascism'... It is necessary to clarify things well: it is not a simple question of terminology. If it is considered correct to apply the label of fascism to any form of reaction, that's all right. But I do not understand what advantages this represents for us, except perhaps for that related to agitation and propaganda. But reality is another thing. Fascism is a unique and specific form of reaction; and it is necessary perfectly to understand of what this uniqueness consists. [3]

It is certainly necessary to understand the 'uniqueness' of both fascism and the present-day dictatorial regimes of Latin America. Of course, the uniqueness of fascism obviously does not stem from the harsh application of state violence to the subordinated classes. Any marxist analysis starts from that point, recognizing the class nature of the state and how it conserves social unity and coherence in a class-divided society through the exertion of legal violence upon the exploited masses. The fact that class oppression might be exerted through methods which contain a variable degree of overt violence is an important element in the understanding of the mechanisms through which a class rules; but it will never be sufficient to characterize a form of state. Otherwise, we could conclude that the Czarist monarchy of the Romanovs, the despotic states of the ancient Asiatic civilizations or the terror phase in the French bourgeois democratic revolution were also 'fascist'. Since violence is essential to any class society and the corresponding state which ensures the domination of the exploiting class, the entire history of class societies would have been no more than the history of fascism. The corollary of this is then a particular conception of fascism which, isolated from all its specific historical and structural characteristics, becomes equivalent to what American political science calls 'authoritarianism'. It is thereby transformed from a historical category into an abstract concept. This is a process of theoretical degeneration analogous to the one which the concept of 'capitalism' underwent when some authors, despite the frequent warnings of Marx, confused it with the mere existence of commercial or usury capital.

It is then necessary to abandon an abstract characterization of fascism for the purposes of political analysis — as distinct from agitation or propaganda. We must recognize that we are facing the rise of a new form of bourgeois domination which cannot be

interpreted adequately as if it were just one more example of either Bonapartism, fascism or military dictatorship, the three 'classic' forms of the capitalist exceptional state. There are specific structural traits, more or less visible in different countries, which allow us to assert that a new form of bourgeois domination is taking shape, and that it corresponds to the need for a profound reorganization of the productive apparatus imposed by the new pattern of capitalist accumulation. However, it is necessary to warn against a simplification of this argument, which might establish a mechanical, linear, relationship between the new form of capitalist accumulation and dictatorial regimes like the so-called Latin American 'fascisms'. There are important exceptions that confirm, once more, that the determinants rooted in the productive process are mediated in such a way that their final outcome is far from being mechanically derived from the economic premises.

ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, MEXICO

The Latin American experience demonstrates that the processes of reorganization of the dependent economies under monopoly capital have taken place under surprisingly diverse social and political conditions and they have arrived at rather diverse political regimes. In some cases, as in Argentina in the 1960s, the offensive of international monopoly capital took place against a background of heightening class struggle and increasing political mobilization of the working class and of fractions of the petty-bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie also joined in this crusade against imperialism and the combined efforts of all these classes brought about the spectacular but temporary defeat of imperialist capital. Although the progressive collapse of the military regime (inaugurated in 1966) and the return of Peronism demonstrated the strong accumulation of forces in the popular camp, they also showed, with no less clarity, the incurable weakness of this broad opposition alliance. Its unity derived more from a common rejection of military rule — for many different structural reasons — than from a sharing of alternative historical goals. Hence, not many people were surprised by the rapid disintegration of the alliance. Its internal contradictions had developed openly, and with rare bitterness, from the very moment when the Peronists returned to power in 1973, and were bound to continue until the ousting of Isabel Peron, on 24 March 1976. In less than three years the proletariat had fallen from the summit to the abyss. A whole epoch of Argentinian history closed with an unprecedented defeat for the working class. It would not therefore be inconceivable that, after such a disaster, the bourgeois-imperialistic bloc could reassert itself in power and eventually succeed in its hegemonic offensive.

In Brazil after the 1964 military coup the story was rather different. Here the implantation of the transnationals, although not without problems, took place in an atmosphere of 'social peace' that the military government, unlike its counterpart in Argentina, was able to guarantee through the application of tough measures against the none-too-serious record of popular and student resistance of 1964-8. Of course, this did not mean that the hegemony of international monopoly capital would remain unchallenged. The very success of this new phase of capitalist accumulation reintroduced into the political scene several bourgeois fractions, middle sectors and social groups whose objective interests clashed with the aims of imperialist capital, its allies and its political representatives in the state apparatus.

The case of Mexico, on the other hand, is an extremely interesting one. Here the reorganization of the dependent economy in the 1960s did not profoundly alter the political stability that the Mexican state has enjoyed since the Presidencies of Calles (1928-34) and Cardenas (1934-40). However, the growing economic predominance of transnational capital did make the maintenance of the pact of domination between the different bourgeois fractions and their political representatives more difficult. If one also takes into account the economic crisis as well as the apparent deterioration in the state's capacity to lead the urban masses and the peasantry through a complex semi-corporative system and to organize a popular consensus in favour of the political aims of the bourgeoisie, then it is easy to realize the structural character of the mounting social agitation which recently became noticeable in Mexico. The continuing development of capitalism urgently needs a solution to the severe problems it is currently facing in that country.

THE VARIETY OF STATE FORMS

This rapid comparison is enough to show that the reorganization in the dependent economies did not have any one single effect on a country's political superstructure. On the contrary, there have been many differences and it would be possible to indicate many more if other cases, such as Venezuela, Chile and Uruguay, were to be taken into account. For that reason, the assertion that the new form of capitalist accumulation involves a strong tendency towards the authoritarian reorganization of the state is true; but it is false to claim that the new pattern of accumulation inexorably leads to the establishment of 'fascism'.^[4] Such variation in the relationships between base and superstructure is not an exclusive trait of the new pattern of capitalist accumulation in the periphery; rather, this diversity of political forms with the same economic base is a constant in any social formation. Marx himself often referred to this when he criticized those who thought of historical materialism as a sort of

deterministic philosophy of history. For that reason, although Marx said that it is the relationship between the owners of the means of production and the direct producers that would reveal the 'hidden basis of the entire social structure' and 'the corresponding specific form of the state', he also added:

This does not prevent the same economic basis — the same from the standpoint of its main conditions — due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances.[5]

Lenin, in turn, expressed similar ideas concerning the variety of state forms compatible with the domination of one class: in ancient societies, the domination of the slave-owners appeared under the form of the monarchy, the aristocratic republic or the democratic republic. In bourgeois society, the supremacy of capitalists can be exerted through constitutional monarchy, a democratic republic or the exceptional forms of the capitalist state. Of course, this is not a denial of the important differences that exist among these forms, but only an attempt to underline that, under all these forms we can still find the rule of capital.

In Latin American history there are many examples of how variation in political forms accompanies structurally similar situations. For instance, the expansion of the primary-export economy, which in some countries generates a vigorous process of capitalist development, gave place to regimes as different as the Mexican Porfiriato, the Brazilian Empire (and the subsequent *República Velha*), the Chilean parliamentary republic (based on the maintenance of the censitaire electoral regime) and the Argentine presidentialist regime. The latter, at the end of its historical cycle, experienced a notable enlargement of its social base which transformed the narrow but consolidated oligarchical republic into an unstable and shaky bourgeois democracy, the weakness of which prevented it from enduring the world crisis of 1930. Analogous diversity is found in the phase of home-based industrialization: there, the crisis of the oligarchical state was provisionally saved in the 1930s and 1940s by the rise of the populist state, whose most important historical examples were Peronism in Argentina, Vargasism in Brazil, Cardenism in Mexico and the Chilean Popular Front. It should not be surprising, then, to find just as relevant contrasts among the regimes currently labelled as 'fascist'. The forms of implantation, their trajectories, the concrete policies sponsored by their governments and the chances of success of imperialist capital and its allies are quite different in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, to mention but a few. Moreover, there are countries like Bolivia and Paraguay, for example, that are marked

by a lack of development in their productive forces, a flimsy constitution of their bourgeoisies and a backwardness of their capitalist development whose situations are therefore completely different. Hence the states in Bolivia and Paraguay resemble much more the classic military dictatorship, the praetorian guardian of the alliance between the native oligarchy and imperialist capital, than the more complex forms of bourgeois domination prevailing in the countries of more advanced capitalist development.

In conclusion, it is important to summarize the criteria by which, even in the cases of more advanced development of the productive forces, it is incorrect to assimilate the modern Latin American dictatorships into fascism:

1 Because they are forms of the capitalist exceptional states that emerge in different phases of the imperialist stage of capitalism, and consequently exhibit significant differences both with regard to the pact of domination and to the mechanisms for the realization of capital. With regard to the former, the composition of the bloc in power, in what we might tentatively call the 'military state' in Latin America, is clearly different from the European fascist state: it has as its dominant fraction international monopoly capital, something that was not present in the fascist regimes of Europe. Fascism belongs to the 'classic' phase of imperialism, while the military state belongs to the contemporary 'neo-imperialistic' one. In the latter we have noted the capitulation of the national bourgeoisie to imperialist monopoly capital organized in transnational corporations. By the same token, if it is impossible to understand fascism without looking at the national bourgeoisie of the countries that came late to capitalist development and the division of the world market, it is also impossible to understand the military state without studying the internationalization of capital and its increasing penetration into peripheral economies. As far as realization of capital is concerned, suffice it to say that imperialist investment is now oriented primarily towards the internal markets of the peripheral economies and it therefore replaces the forms of military conquest and the political alliances typical of the 'classic' phase.

2 The lack of a mass social basis in the military state. These are regimes structurally incapable of attracting the support of the petty bourgeoisie, except perhaps for some small layers of it. There is no broad mass movement supporting the regime, as in fascism. This reveals the weakness of these military regimes and their need for an ever-growing use of physical repression.

3 The structure and functioning of the state apparatuses also reveals that there are significant differences with fascism. The impossibility of building a corporative state, the absence of a single mass party and of a charismatic leadership, and the lack of a totalitarian ideology containing an alternative programme of social organization are just some examples of the different character of Latin American dictatorships.

STATE MONOPOLY CAPITALISM

The issue of the state apparatuses is a good example of an original problem posed by these new forms of state, about which the historical precedent of the fascist regimes reveals very little. Moreover, the whole topic of the state apparatus is closely linked to the characterization of the current phase of imperialist capitalism: state monopoly capitalism (SMC) and its current significance in the Latin American experience. Analysis of the state apparatus, therefore, must be undertaken in the light of the changes produced in the capitalist economies by the advent of SMC. The theme is of great importance since the staggering development of SMC has produced profound alterations in the functioning of contemporary capitalist states, not only in advanced societies but also in dependent and peripheral ones. However, most studies on this issue have concentrated on analysing the economic consequences of the growth of SMC, bypassing the study of its political implications which, needless to say, are most pressing because they require a reformulation of some of the classic discussions of the marxist theory of the state. Marxist economic analysis is much more aware of the profound transformations taking place in the capitalist economies, while political theorists seem much more preoccupied with the ritual repetition of what Lenin said in 1917, than in assimilating the intellectual and political audacity with which Lenin interpreted the great economic, political and social transformations taking place in his day.

It was Lenin who for the first time posed the question of SMC. A few months after he published *Imperialism*, Lenin revised some of the theses set forth in his book. The impact of the First World War on the European economies did not pass him by and in 'The impending catastrophe and how to combat it', written at the end of September 1917, Lenin held that the war had contributed to the extraordinary transformation of monopoly capitalism into SMC, the latter being considered as the 'most complete material preparation for socialism, the threshold of socialism, a rung in the historical ladder between which and the rung named socialism there are no intermediate rungs'. However, in this writing, as well as in other later works (like 'On the tax in kind', 1921), Lenin took care to clarify the diverse concrete historical meanings that SMC develops. SMC could be an apparatus in the service of the alliance forged between the Junkers and the German bourgeoisie, as well as an instrument in the service of the alliance between the workers and the peasants of the rising democratic revolutionary state. An instrument for the consolidation of proletarian power or a blood bank for a dying capitalism, SMC was interpreted by Lenin through a rigorous examination of the concrete totality of which it was part. Its significance was construed as

originating in its specific location in a concrete state, which, inevitably, represented the dictatorship of one class, be it the bourgeoisie or the proletariat.

The recognition given by Lenin to this problem is relevant to us now. First, there was his intellectual attitude, always open and eager to grasp the historical and profound meaning of daily processes and emerging trends and expressions of social development, and his readiness to integrate them with a marxism enriched by his own theoretical elaborations, made 'on the road' and without hesitation. He was always correcting, revising, enlarging and deepening his previous propositions, always transforming, as Lukacs said, theory into practice, and practice into theory. Secondly, there was his early identification of a transformation in the capitalist state which would have an enduring impact on the possibility of a stable domination by the bourgeoisie, since SMC, arisen from the necessities of the War, made it possible for the bourgeoisie to socialize its losses and to create new circuits for the appropriation of economic surplus. Last but not least, the growth of SMC and the corresponding expansion of the state apparatus presented new issues to marxist political theory because, as Lenin repeatedly pointed out, those sectors of state capitalism are a part of the state apparatus: it would be unwise and nonsensical to destroy them (as is the case with the bureaucracy or the army) because they can be accommodated into the new worker-peasant state.

Since Lenin's days SMC has continued to grow, transforming itself quantitatively as well as qualitatively. State interventionism, together with the predominance of monopolies, has enormously broadened the scope of SMC: today, almost half the national income of most of the advanced capitalist economies is spent by government and state-owned corporations, while on the eve of the First World War, when Lenin made his remarks, this proportion oscillated around 10 per cent. The two wars and the depression of 1929 were the factors that gave a tremendous impetus to SMC, taking it to its present-day levels. Needless to say, this process did not take place in all of the advanced capitalist nations at the same time or in the same way: there were some countries, like Germany for instance, in which state capitalism had acquired clear features by the end of the last century, while in others, like the United States, the expansion of SMC took place in the 1930s. However, leaving aside differences in tempo and intensity, the growth of SMC became a common feature of all advanced capitalist economies.

THE STATE ECONOMIC SECTOR

In Latin America this process has taken place more recently and was

promoted both by the adoption of Keynesian anti-cyclical economic policies and, in those countries which had already established a certain industrial basis before the crisis, fostered by the 'crash' of 1929. In spite of the little research done on this subject, which makes it extremely difficult to appraise the real magnitude of state 'intervention' in the economy, it is possible to discern the overall trends of its evolution. Thus, in Argentina, government expenditure, measured as a percentage of the gross national product, rose from 22 per cent in 1945 to 25 per cent in 1969-70; while in Brazil and Mexico the growth of public expenditure was much steeper, rising from 16 to 33 per cent and 11 to 22 per cent respectively for the same years. I calculate that in Chile the proportion of government expenditure to the GNP rose from 17 to 36 percent between 1945 and 1967/8.

These global figures, whose value is only indicative, are consistent with others which deal with other specifics of state growth in Latin America: the increase in tax collection, in public investments and in bureaucracy are other areas in which it is possible to observe the formidable expansion of the state apparatus in some countries of the region. Similar conclusions could be derived from a look at the existing data on the evolution of state-owned corporations: their number, economic areas of operation, personnel employed, assets and total sales reveal the extraordinary growth that they have experienced in the last twenty years. One study shows that in Argentina, for instance, the state, the provinces and the municipalities own or administer no less than 770 public enterprises. What is particularly remarkable is the fact that the fastest growing sector among these corporations is precisely manufacturing, where the state-owned units doubled in the ten-year period 1965 to 1975. In other words, Argentina not only witnessed a significant growth in the public sector, but also in the expansion of state-owned enterprises in the strategic sectors of the national economy, such as oil and its derivatives, steel production, chemicals, mechanical engineering, telecommunications, ship-building and transport. One indication of the weight acquired by these enterprises is that nine out of the thirty largest enterprises (measured by their sales figures in 1969) were government-owned.

This situation is, of course, far from being unique to Argentina; similar trends can be observed in Brazil, Mexico and other Latin American countries. In the former, thirteen public enterprises ranked among the thirty largest corporations (measured by their assets in 1969). This partly explains why the political representatives of monopoly capital did not hesitate to denounce the alarming growth of the state apparatus. This growth was, paradoxically, promoted by a government whose initial rhetoric had flooded the country with slogans dwelling on the immediate restoration of 'private initiative' to its role as the leading force in Brazilian capitalist development. As a

spokesman for private capitalism stated:

The Brazilian government chose in theory a market economy, but in practice the country is marching toward an excessive growth of the public sector ... This de facto evolution, in the sense of a statization of the economy, in contradiction to the professed policy of stimulating private initiative, brings uncertainty with regard to the limits of operation of the public sector.

Recent studies have demonstrated that 42 per cent of the 200 largest corporations in Brazil (measured by their total assets) are the property of the state, which controls 72 per cent of their assets. If we take the twenty-five biggest enterprises, the same report shows that only two privately-owned corporations (the property of foreign firms) would be admitted to the select club of the entrepreneurial giants, the remaining twenty-three being state-owned corporations.

DENATIONALIZATION AND FORMS OF DOMINATION

What conclusions could be drawn from these preliminary notes? Despite their tentative and exploratory character it is possible to pose some questions related to the political significance of the growth of SMC, and particularly related to the constitution of a new form of bourgeois domination in Latin America.

Despite bourgeois theories of a 'mixed economy' according to which these economies are half-socialist and half-capitalist, the real meaning and the historical projection of SMC are explained by the pact of domination which, through the state, asserts itself over the rest of society. Under given conditions the very requisites for the political survival of the bourgeois bloc force the adoption of economic policies which in practice mean the further statization of the economy. These are needed to stabilize the economic and political conditions of bourgeois domination. The existence of SMC does not mean that the prevailing mode of production is other than capitalist or that the state is not also capitalist; it is the state of the bourgeoisie, where the interests of different bourgeois fractions and social groups allied to its domination prevail over those of the subordinated classes, in spite of the concessions that the latter extract from the bourgeoisie through struggle. That SMC strengthens the 'private' monopoly bourgeoisie is unequivocally demonstrated by recent trends in the Chilean economy. Notwithstanding the fact that the state-owned corporations control 84 per cent of the assets for the top 100 firms operating in that country, they barely control 48 per cent of their sales, something which reveals the magnitude of the process of surplus transfer in favour of private monopoly capital. A rapid glance at Brazilian data produces similar conclusions: in 1976 the public

sector controlled almost 72 per cent of the assets of the top 200 corporations, but only 40 per cent of total sales. This figure was identical to the proportion of sales taken up by forty-five transnational giants, despite the fact that they only controlled 13 per cent of the assets of the top 200 enterprises. Thus, in Brazil as in Chile, the economic surpluses were funnelled towards the private sector.

Although the military state in Latin America has promoted the de-nationalization of the economy, creating favourable conditions for foreign capital, this policy was accompanied either by an impressive reinforcement of state capitalism (as in Brazil) or by its maintenance at levels similar to the ones prevailing before the inauguration of the new regime (as in Chile). This means that the new form of bourgeois domination in Latin America tries to solve the contradictions created by the expansion of capitalism in the present phase by the redistribution of 'areas of influence'. This redistribution is detrimental to national capital and favourable to imperialist capital in the strategic sectors of the economy. But the military state can dislodge the national bourgeoisie, using imperialist capital, only if it simultaneously expands state capitalism. This does not mean that during the complex process of re-accommodation (between the different fractions of national capitalism, of imperialist capital, their political representatives and the governing cadres of the military state) there would not arise confrontations and struggle originating in the efforts made by classes, fractions and social groups to improve their relative position in the power bloc, modifying to their advantage the conditions of their participation in the pact of domination. What we find is not only an increase in the level of repression against the working classes but also a fierce struggle within the dominant classes. Contrary to what happened in the fascist regimes of Italy and Germany, where the national bourgeoisie was the class around whose historical programme state capitalism evolved, the national bourgeoisie in Latin America is precisely the fraction displaced and subdued by the rule of imperialist monopolies. This national bourgeoisie is among the 'losers' of the new regimes and this is the meaning of the bitter complaint voiced by Orlando Saenz, one of the corporate representatives of the Chilean national bourgeoisie and implacable critic of the economic policies of the Popular Unity. Referring to the economic policies of the military junta, he recently declared: 'it is truly incredible that it should have been this government that would terminate the national firms which produce capital goods'.[7]

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci called attention to the growing complexity of civil society and, using a comparison drawn from military science, he argued that civil society resembled the complicated system of trenches and fortresses put into operation during the First World War. In this metaphor Gramsci tried to draw attention to the capacity of the modern state to resist the 'catastrophic irruptions'

which endangered its stability — the impact, that is, of general crises, wars and massive unemployment. Today, four decades after Gramsci's death, the continuing expansion of SMC has given the capitalist state new mechanisms for absorbing crises — mechanisms which, as with the institutions of civil society, operate as 'shock absorbers' of class contradictions, making it possible for the capitalist state, even among dependent nations, to overcome obstacles that in earlier days, in the years of competitive capitalism, would have brought about the collapse of the liberal state. In other words, just as modern capitalism has tried to develop economic mechanisms which would reduce and minimize the effects of the cycle, the modern state, given its growing role in the reproduction of capitalism, has been acquiring renewed capabilities to neutralize or attenuate the impact of modifications produced, as a result of class struggle, in the correlation of forces which define a particular critical conjuncture. Therefore, it is a state which has greater resources for resolving, in a conservative sense of the word, a relatively grave crisis situation: it has more 'degrees of freedom' than the classic liberal state and, for this reason, it can mobilize resources that might enable it to avoid the danger of a revolutionary breakdown. It has an enormous budget; it shares the control of huge ideological apparatuses with the bourgeoisie, enabling it to bombard the population with the required ideological messages at the right moment; it can redistribute incomes, create demand, open new jobs, subsidize industries, control prices, plan the economy and create state monopolies. The state in modern capitalist society is a Leviathan which goes much farther than the classic marxist description of the state — which, inspired by the observation of the liberal European states of the late nineteenth century, insisted on an analysis of a bureaucracy and a repressive apparatus whose dimensions and functions were comparatively negligible and absolutely simple.

These changes in the anatomy of state organization pose new problems. They have to be faced, in the domain of theory as well as in the field of praxis, by the social forces interested in the promotion of social transformation. It would be as wrong to ignore them, naively arguing that the capitalist state 'is always the same', as it would be to assume that the recognition of the new problems tacitly implies that the marxist theory of the state is obsolescent. On the contrary, to understand these original developments of the capitalist state requires a creative effort which, starting from the fundamental theoretical premises of marxism, must be able to re-elaborate the pertinent theoretical propositions in order to enable them to capture the distinctive traits of the contemporary political process. It goes without saying that this effort of theoretical development, whose route is far from being linear and simple, has nothing to do with the repetition of classic quotations, patiently ruminating the sacred texts.

This is easier but ineffectual. It is necessary, on the contrary, to identify the 'problematic knots' which characterize the contemporary capitalist state, then to proceed to study them minutely, unveiling their hidden traits and historical specificity in the light of historical materialism, the intellectual and political legacy of which to the social sciences remains of unparalleled richness.[8]

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- 3 Palmiro Togliatti, *La via italiana al socialismo* (Mexico, 1972). A judgement entirely coincident with Togliatti's has been recently expressed by another well-known anti-fascist leader: Lelio Basso. He argued that the petty-bourgeois social base of fascism, its structural links with the national monopolistic bourgeoisie, its impressive party organization and its nationalism clearly differentiate it from the Latin American dictatorships. He also added that European fascism was the result of the political defeat of the revolutionary offensive of the working classes, a situation that, once more, is not strictly comparable to that prevailing in Latin America. See his insightful comments in *Chile-America* (Rome, July-August 1977, No 33-4).
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- 5 K. Marx, *Capital*
- 6 Charles Bettelheim, *La economia alemana bajo el nazismo* (Madrid, 1973), II. For a comparison between Germany and Italy, see Daniel Guerin, *Fascisme et grand capital* (Paris, 1945).
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- 8 This is what Lenin said about this problem in his 'The tasks of the Youth Leagues': 'If the study of Communism consisted solely in imbibing what is contained in communist books and pamphlets, we might all too easily become Communist text-jugglers or braggarts ... incapable of combining this knowledge and would be unable to act in the way Communism really demands.' And later he goes on to say: 'We do not need cramming; but we do need to develop and perfect the mind of every student by a knowledge of the fundamental facts. For Communism would become a void, a mere signboard, and a Communist would become a mere braggart, if all the knowledge he has obtained were not digested in his mind. You must not only assimilate this knowledge, you must assimilate it critically, so as not to cram your mind with useless lumber, but enrich it with all those facts that are indispensable to the modern man of education.'

'It's only human nature': the sociobiologist's fairyland*

Football crowds shout for rival teams and, at the end of the match, fights break out between supporters of the two sides. Advanced industrial nations spend up to 10 per cent of their gross national product on armaments of greater and greater sophistication when their stock-piles are already sufficient to obliterate all life on earth many times over. Why? 'It's only human nature. Man is by nature aggressive, and these are two ways of showing it.'

Schoolchildren compete in exams for top place; adults compete for jobs against a background of unemployment; businesses compete with each other for contracts and profits. Why? 'It's only human nature. Man is by nature greedy and competitive and seeks power over others; some people are naturally superior in the competition, others inferior, and the struggle sorts out natural winners from natural losers.'

Entry into Britain by foreigners, especially those with black, brown or yellow skins, is restricted by law. Once inside, groups with different religions or skin colours are discriminated against in housing or jobs and their families physically and mentally assaulted. Why? 'It's only human nature. Men are by nature territorial, group-living animals, asserting of their rights of ownership over land, and xenophobic.'

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*A review article of E.O. Wilson's *On human nature* (Harvard University Press, 1978), adapted from a BBC Radio 3 talk on sociobiology, first broadcast in Autumn 1978.

Throughout society, men occupy the highest positions, in government, industry, science, medicine; women, the inferior ones as secretaries, technicians, schoolteachers, nurses. Why? 'It's only human nature. Men have naturally higher skills than women for these demanding tasks — women are essentially nurturative, concerned with child-rearing, and at work only incidentally — and only in the jobs which mimic their roles as home-makers; office wives, tenders of the sick, teachers of the young. In all societies patriarchy is inevitable.'

How often, when oppressed people in struggle query some aspect of the social order, does the answer come back like that, full of the heavy certainty of the 'naturalness' of any piece of human conduct, that 'things are so and rightly and inevitably so'. 'You can't change human nature', we are told, with an air of either smug satisfaction or pious resignation, when we are moved to protest about any seeming injustice. Yet what is this mysterious, looming abstraction which seemingly lies at the core of any piece of human conduct, any type of social relation?

Up until the middle of the last century, the inevitabilities of human nature were seen as part of god's ordering of the universe, a god which had created humanity in a given mould, provided rules for the proper conduct of human affairs and established an unquestionable hierarchy 'the rich man in his castle, the poor man at the gate'. With the final death of god — already wounded fearfully by the rise of Newtonian science in the seventeenth century — at the hands of the triumphant Darwinism of the nineteenth, then science, in the form of biology, replaced him as the arbiter of human nature and destiny. Biology, rather than god, was responsible for setting the limits to human conduct and potential: class, race and sexual struggles were to be seen as the working out of the inevitable consequences of the iron laws of evolution: the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, were the Darwinian categories that lay beneath Victorian *laissez-faire* capitalism, and Britain's imperial expansion. Social Darwinism, given its full ideological form by Herbert Spencer, was seductive as a mode of describing and rationalizing 'the way the world was' not merely to philosophers and politicians, but to many biologists as well, and did not Darwin's own 'solution' to the mechanism of evolution derive from Malthus's view of the inevitability of competition for scarce resources in human populations?

Over recent years, after a period of disrepute, this tendency towards biological law-giving has once again become high fashion, dignified now by names which lay claim to new scientific legitimacy. Ethology, which has a long and in many ways distinguished intellectual history, has become aggrandized into 'sociobiology', whose prophets claim it as the science of the future into which will be merged as well not merely the brain sciences such as neurobiology

and psychology, but also the sciences of human society, sociology, economics, politics. The mainsprings of human conduct will be discovered deep in all of our biological histories and as a result not only will human nature be understood and quantified, it will become predictable as well; from the position you and your partner adopt while copulating and your neighbour's quarrel with his mother-in-law, through the protests over nuclear power to the date and form of the coming revolution in South Africa — sociobiology's claim to the ownership of the inscribed tablets of the iron laws of history are universalistic to the point of megalomania.

It is easy to imagine a better world than the present — one for example, where, across large areas of the globe people do *not* die routinely of famine and famine-induced disease; where the perinatal mortality of Liverpool or the Rhondda is no higher than in Hampstead or Bournemouth; where unemployment and routine alienated labour is eliminated and our children educated to develop their human and creative possibilities to the full; where we live without the imminent threat of destruction from nuclear war begun by accident or design; and where humanity's relationships with nature are harmonious rather than exploitative. Yet at the same time our imagination of, our striving for, the new world runs full tilt into the claims of 'hard-nosed realism'. What is, is what must be. It is only human nature. Offered a vision of Utopia, the realist defenders of the status quo substitute sociobiology. For them, in the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed prophets are to be defined as mad, and have their eyes removed.

So it is important to look at the method and reasoning employed by this law-giving subject which claims to tell us who we are and how we must live. In this article, I want to discuss some of the general claims made by sociobiology to be able to provide explanatory or predictive knowledge of the behaviour of humans, individually or in groups.

Now it is relatively easy to respond simply by saying that sociobiology tells us what *is*, but not what *ought* to be: that one cannot derive moral precepts from biological observations; that biology is neutral about human morality whatever it says about human animality — indeed, many sociobiologists, though not all by any means, would offer such a disclaimer. The substance of my disagreement with sociobiology's claims, however, is far deeper than this truism. I would argue that the entire structure of the method and reasoning employed by sociobiology contains a series of fundamental flaws. Hence the general claims that it makes to provide explanatory or predictive knowledge of the behaviour of humans, individually or in groups, are *scientifically* invalid, and not merely morally neutral or otiose. Note that this critique of sociobiology is written from a standpoint which accepts that there is a field of *science* for discussion here — a field which may become, and in the case of sociobiology

has become a battleground between science and ideology, but one in which, nonetheless it is possible to distinguish truth from falsity, science from ideology or social relations.[1] I am specifically *not* discussing here the social determinants of the renewed interest in biological determinism, nor its manifestly ideological functions.

I am setting this discussion against two backgrounds. The first is the surge of popular and semi-popular books which have appeared over the last few years, by people like Desmond Morris, Konrad Lorenz, Robert Ardrey, Tiger and Fox, and more recently Richard Dawkins (*The selfish gene*).[2] All of these claim to provide accounts of some of the terrain which E.O. Wilson, in a more academic but no less controversial book, has called *Sociobiology — the new synthesis* (Harvard University Press, 1975), a pared down and popular version of which is *On human nature*. The second background point to be made is that these sociobiologists do not all speak with one voice; indeed there are quite bitter disputes over theory and methodology between them, as between, for example, the school which claims that the 'unit of selection' in the evolution of societies is the group, and that which believes it is the individual or the genes packaged inside that individual and his or her near relatives. These disputes do not concern me here. For the purpose of my present discussion, whether one is a group — or kin — selectionist is irrelevant. I want to try to demonstrate that all types of contemporary sociobiological thinking embody within them a set of interlocking fallacies, which render their claim to scientificity spurious. And in order to do this — and this is the final caveat I wish to make — I propose to use examples wider, perhaps, than some advocates of sociobiology would want to accept as falling within their framework. Having exposed these fallacies, I am then able to ask: what ideological function — whose interests — do they serve? Who benefits from sociobiological thinking?

First, what the sociobiologists do is to take aspects of human behaviour and attempt to abstract certain common features from them. A mother protecting her baby from attack, a doctor risking his or her life in a cholera epidemic, a soldier leading a doomed assault on a machine-gun post, all express 'altruism'. A child's logical and numerical skills, its reading ability and conformity to its teacher's expectations are all measures of an underlying, unitary 'intelligence'. Note how this trick works, by taking a process with a dynamic and a history of its own involving individuals and their relations, that is a social interaction, and isolating out an abstract, underlying, fixed thing, or 'quality'. This process, of *reification*, is not dissimilar to the phrenology of the early nineteenth century, in which a human was seen as a mosaic of different pieces of behaviour — a person's brain had a 'bump of philoprogenitiveness', another for 'love of music' and so forth.

Now sociobiologists would dispute this claim, arguing that far from lumping together disparate activities and reifying them in a

phrenological manner, they were doing no more and no less than Newton when he saw the fall of an apple and the motion of the moon as different cases of the same law of gravity. The difference between the sociobiologists and Newton is however profound. It is as if Newton had defined gravity as a 'property' of the apple, rather than as law describing an aspect of the relationship between the apple and the earth. It was precisely because he transcended the reified property and understood the relationship between objects that Newtonian mechanics advanced, and it is because they do not do this that the sociobiologists' attempt to reduce disparate phenomena to a common denominator must fail. In the sociobiological universe, characteristics such as altruism or aggression, locked inside individual's heads as reified properties, also become abstract forces which move the individuals who possess them like clockwork mechanisms. One can see this at work when sociobiologists attempt to measure the quality that they have reified, as for example when they attempt to quantify aggression by reducing it to a measure of how fast rats kill mice placed in cages along with them — an experimental approach dignified with the name of the study of 'muricidal' behaviour.

What happens in this approach is that the fixed and reified property becomes attached to an individual rather than emerging from a situation. It is individuals who then become aggressive, altruistic, intelligent and so forth, and the *same property* becomes manifest in different circumstances. The aggressive male is essentially playing the same role whether on a picket line, in a football crowd or beating his wife; he is expressing, in different forms, aspects of the same underlying biological property (contrast this, for example, with a definition of 'intelligence' not as a property of the individual but of a relationship — of that individual with others and with the social and natural worlds which confront her or him).[3]

Once you've performed this labelling trick, the way is open to seek for the location of the quality inside the individual — for if a person is aggressive, it is clear that there must be, for instance, a region of the brain which is *responsible* for the aggression — from which it follows that one can eliminate 'undesirable' aggression, whether of strikers or football fans, by removing or modifying the bit of the brain which is responsible for it.

Examples of this first fallacy, of reification, are numerous. One is the Russian practice of labelling political dissidents as mad and treating them for schizophrenia. A second is a book by a couple of American psychosurgeons, *Violence and the brain*,[4] which, in the face of the inner city riots which raged through the US, argued that whatever the social reasons which might be involved, the riots might be best explained by there being something wrong with the 'aggression centres' in the brains of a number of ghetto leaders, and that urban violence could be cured by removing a small region of the

brain — the amygdala — from some 5 to 10 per cent of ghetto dwellers. A couple of years ago, I came across a copy of a letter from an American prison governor which made the same case — it asked for neurosurgical examination and intervention for a black prisoner whose signs of ‘illness’ were ‘organizing a prison work strike, learning karate, hatred for white society and reading revolutionary literature’. In similar vein, it is common practice in American inner cities now to define children who are disrespectful of their teachers and poor learners (with a high proportion of blacks and Chicanos) as suffering from ‘minimal brain dysfunction’ and to drug them with an amphetamine-like substance called Ritalin. It is estimated that some 600,000 pre-puberty inner city school children are currently being dosed with daily Ritalin pills on the basis of school reports — not because there are any physical or neurological ‘signs of disorder’, but because their teachers and psychiatrists have reified, out of the complex interaction of these school kids with their schools, homes and the wider society, a ‘disease’ of too little amphetamine in the brain!* What this reification does is to reverse the old slogan ‘do not adjust your mind, the fault is in reality’.[5] Instead, the ‘fault’ is located within the individual, a phrenological bump of aggression, or social dissatisfaction.

Having abstracted — reified — aspects of a social interaction into uniform qualities of an individual participant in that interaction, the next fallacy of sociobiological thinking is to quantify the quality. That’s easy: you simply ask ‘how much’ aggression, intelligence, altruism or whatever an individual possesses. We are accustomed to thinking in linear, ordinal terms. If someone is intelligent, we ask ‘how intelligent?’ ‘more or less intelligent than some other person?’ — and so on, till we end up with a ranking scale against which the entire citizenry can be categorized and their ‘quality’, intelligence, given a number, like the infamous IQ. The spurious numerology which masquerades as science has such a grip on day-to-day thinking that it is often not hard to accept the apparent scientificity of this type of sociobiological argumentation.

Asking the question ‘how much’ in an ordinal, linear way, is only very seldom a sensible scientific question and is often quite meaningless — to reply to the question ‘how many bananas make six’ by saying ‘two apples’ may be grammatically correct, but is empty of scientific content.

So there are the first two fallacies of sociobiology — the reification, then the quantification. Now for the third. This is the appeal to

*Although there is some evidence that Ritalin and related substances may be in very sporadic use in Britain, it is important to emphasize that on the whole the British response has been to label children as maladjusted or educationally subnormal and dump them into special schools instead. ‘Therapy’ seems more likely to mean attempted ‘behaviour modification’ by reward and punishment than drugs.

biological 'evidence' from the study of non-human animals. As humans are a particular animal species, with a continuity of evolutionary links with the rest of the biological world, it is not unreasonable to expect to find analogies for human behaviour amongst other animals. The strength of ethology has lain in its study of animals in their natural environments and in social interaction. However, the problem that such studies run into is just the same as that of the study of human behaviour, but more so, for it is now necessary to look in non-humans for 'qualities' abstracted out of human experience. If it is hard enough to study an aspect of human relations without reifying, what happens when we take terms for human behaviour — intelligence, curiosity, altruism, aggression — and look for their analogies in animals? So we find species of ants which introduce others into their nest, where they perform certain of the tasks of the ant economy, classified as 'slave-making' ants. Some strains of rats, in appropriate conditions, tend to kill mice placed in their cages, and these become labelled as 'aggressive' rats. The use of an identical label, which may be no more than a sort of pun, or observer's shorthand, becomes an explanation. Unitary labels must imply unitary mechanisms, and 'aggression' in other animals must imply the 'innate aggression' of humans too. Thus a sort of conjuring trick takes place in which the sociobiologist looks at the natural world in terms of human categories, and then turns back to the social world once more and claims that because such phenomena occur in other animals as well as humans, they must be biologically based in humans, and hence they represent inevitable and immutable categories of human behaviour. It is a world of looking-glass logic, to which E.O. Wilson is particularly prone.

The final trick — the fourth of the sociobiological fallacies — is to play a sort of fairy-tale game. In it, one says 'just suppose' that any particular human or social character was biologically — genetically — determined, then what would the consequences be? A good example of this comes in Dawkins' book, in which he uses the 'just suppose' game for sexual constancy. 'Just suppose', he argues, that all females were sexually genetically constant, whilst a proportion of males had a gene for constancy and the rest a gene for 'philandering' — then what would the consequences be? He concludes that a population with a given proportion of male 'philanderers' would form an 'evolutionary stable strategy', and presumably, therefore, that a male's propensity to be faithful or unfaithful to his spouse is just another of those biologically determined variables of human behaviour which is immune to social explanation. Whether you are (as a male) a Casanova or an Abelard is genetically laid down before you start (so, according to one of Wilson's most favoured acolytes, R. Trivers, may be the alleged like of adults and dislike of children for spinach!) The point is not that one shouldn't make models of

behaviour, it is that we are in constant danger of being seduced by our models, of being so enchanted by the fact that they 'fit' the data that we ignore that an infinity of *other* models could equally well fit one's observations. The point about models is that they must be testable and refutable. The trouble with the sociobiologist's models is that they become a closed world — there is no sort of situation to which one cannot get a fit granted enough suppositions about genes for this or that piece of behaviour and some other genetic properties like dominance or partial expressivity. Some of the wilder reaches of this sort of fairyland model-building come when we discover that, according to some psychometricians of the Eysenck school, not only are differences in intelligence largely inherited but so are children's capacity to learn French at school, neuroticism, radicalism versus conservatism in political thought and even twin's tendencies to answer consistently or inconsistently on questionnaires (thereby 'saving the phenomenon' with a vengeance!).

The charge that the sociobiological world is 'closed' to possible experimental refutation, whilst serious, does not make sociobiology unique. Many fields of science operate within paradigms—general overarching theories — which are so comprehensive and adaptable to 'new' facts that they are not capable of refutation in the classical sense of philosophy of science — evolutionary theory itself is an example. So is astronomy, whether in its Ptolemaic or Galilean form.

Yet evolutionary theory, despite the unresolved paradoxes within it — and they are many and powerful — is *the* great unifying hypothesis within which so much of biology can be encompassed that its strengths are unchallengeable. My charge against the tautologies and self-fulfilling prophecies of sociobiology is that, because of the set of fallacies embedded within them, which result in the reduction of living organisms in all their richness to jerky caricatured puppets pulled by strings of 'selfish genes', its tautologies are scientifically sterile* — the tautologies of pre-Copernican astronomy, not those of evolutionary theory. Far from being much abused 'new Galileos', as their advocates have claimed for them, the sociobiologists are mere Ptolemaic medieval schoolmen. Finally, sociobiology's claim to biologize away the study of human societies by the methods of sociology, economics, political science and history, fails the very simple test that there is no way that sociobiology can possibly account for either differences between particular existing human societies — for instance between South Africa and Tanzania — nor rapid changes of social form within a given society — for instance between China pre-1948 and after 1968. If it can't do these things, at

*Note that, as I emphasized earlier, I am saying nothing here about the ideological function of these sociobiological propositions, but rather viewing them from the 'inside' of a science-versus-pseudoscience battleground.

best the exercise becomes a piece of fashionable Harvard or Oxford intellectual games-playing; at worst a way of ideologically justifying the status quo. These reflections on the methodology of sociobiology in general can be seen as applying to Wilson's *On Human Nature* in particular, as the book represents a pared-down version of his earlier *Sociobiology*, emphasizing how the 'new' thinking of sociobiology affects our understanding of human societies, though a substantial proportion of the book has appeared earlier in magazine and journal articles and a part of it merely reprints a section of the final chapter of *Sociobiology*. The latter book was heavily criticized both for its ideology and its biological and anthropological claims.[6] Nowhere in the present book does Wilson acknowledge these criticisms explicitly and nowhere in his quite extensive bibliography does he refer to a single one of the many articles and books published by his critics. Despite this surprising lack — of academic courtesy if nothing else — Wilson's claims in the present book are moderated from some of the more incautious phrases of *Sociobiology*. Gone, for example, are 'genes' for 'spite' or 'indoctrinability' or whatever, in the crudely phrenological style of his earlier book; now caveats surround each assertion to the point where it often virtually disappears into a cloud of 'tendencies'.

The book takes us through a series of topics which are the now familiar hunting ground for sociobiological theorizing and which have been discussed above; the evolution of human society, aggression, sexual behaviour and differentiation, 'altruism' and religion. It concludes with a call for hope, based upon what he describes as the 'seemingly fatal deterioration of the myths of traditional religion and of its secular equivalents', chief amongst which he places marxism, and their replacement by an ethic of the search for 'scientific truth', previously called for in *Chance and Necessity* by the molecular biologist Jacques Monod [7] — the sort of philosophical naivete that the French immediately dubbed Monodtheism. In Wilson's case this call is the less credible in that whilst he has clearly read his Bible, he shows little evidence of even having read *Marx for beginners*.

What Wilson wants to claim is that the organism and its behaviour represent no more than the gene's way of making another gene; that is, the richness of our biological, mental and social life may be reinterpreted simply in terms of strategies for the survival of selfish genes. This is what we may call hard sociobiology. The fallacy inherent in this neat formulation (deriving, I believe, from Samuel Butler, who argued a century or so ago that a chicken was merely the egg's way of making another egg) is seen if the paradox is inverted; after all it is equally plausible, paradoxical and fallacious to argue that the gene is merely human behaviour's way of creating another piece of human behaviour.

In the book, Wilson slips uneasily between defence of this hard

sociobiology and a much softer version. Sometimes he does this explicitly, as when he claims there are two forms of altruism, hardcore and softcore, and sometimes implicitly, when he lowers his sights to something little more contentious than the claim that one cannot understand human society in the absence of an understanding of human biology. Now while it is easy to understand the relevance of such a soft claim in reaction to the sort of sociological or psychological reductionism (for instance Skinnerian behaviourism) which has been an important intellectual strand in the US, or even in response to some of those ideologues who wish to debiologise the human condition entirely,[8] it is scarcely a serious theoretical challenge to any sort of marxist thinking.

The real failure of the sociobiologists lies in their seeming inability to avoid the either/or trap. Behaviour must be *either* socially or biologically determined, or must represent the arithmetic sum of a biological (genetic) and an environmental component. On the contrary, a proper understanding of the interaction of the biological and the social in the production of humans and their society will only be possible following the simple recognition that *both* genes and environment are perfectly necessary to the expression of any behaviour. That humans have two legs and speak depends upon their genotype; if they were, say four-legged and incapable of spoken communication, human society would be very different. Hence human society is genetically determined. This proposition, which is all soft sociobiology boils down to, is trivial. But intermingled with the soft sociobiology are the harder Wilsonian claims.[9]

Perhaps most of human sex differences in cognition are environmentally determined, but an itsy-bitsy is genetic and in favour of the men, and if 'we' 'choose' a society which minimizes these differences 'we' may; but in doing so 'we' will be going against nature (note Wilson's deliberate avoidance of the question of who 'we' are in this context). In the same way, although he does not go as far as Dawkins in proposing sex-linked genes for 'philandering', for Wilson human males have a genetic tendency towards polygyny, females towards constancy; having a bit on the side is a male characteristic, while females who are sexually attractive have a genetic tendency to rise upward through the social classes. Genetic determinism constantly creeps in at the back door.

The aim of a truly human science of sociobiology would not be to debiologize or to desocialize our understanding of the human condition. It is vital that an integrated dialectical account of human nature be achieved and the traps of either biological or sociological reductionism avoided. Wilsonian sociobiology is, however, a travesty of this goal, marred by grandiloquent claims, falsely dichotomous thinking and an incapacity to distance itself from the particularist assumptions of the dominant racist, sexist and class bound ideology

of late twentieth-century western society.

It is against this that we must pose a real science and vision of humanity — one which says that it is the biological and social nature of humanity to transform itself, reach beyond itself constantly: that what seems fixed or constant is so only in the historical moment which itself is always in flux, that the human nature of feudal, preindustrial society was not the human nature of the industrial revolution, is not the human nature of today's advanced capitalism — and will not be the human nature of the transformed societies of tomorrow — those that will at length have truly achieved that old goal, the freedom of necessity.

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Class and Power in a Punjabi Village

Saghir Ahmad

Introduction by
Kathleen Gough

This is a valuable and pioneering study of class, economy, power, and status in a West Pakistani village. Focusing particularly on changes resulting from the so-called Green Revolution and the institution of adult franchise, Ahmad finds that for most of the villagers, while caste relations may once have dominated their lives, now class relations are far more fundamental—for instance, the ways in which the villagers gain their livelihood, and the resulting landlord-peasant power relationships.

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Notes and documents

Memorial for an exile: Rashed Hussein (1936-77)

On 2 February 1977 Rashed Hussein, Palestinian poet and journalist, died in New York City. A week later he was buried in Mus Mus, his ancestral home in Galilee. This restitution of his final right was made possible by the efforts of his friends in Israel and by international pressure. His funeral aroused deep emotions among the native Palestinians who turned out in their thousands to attend. Eqbal Ahmad spoke at his memorial service in New York.

Modern civilization makes it difficult for the living to experience death — of relatives, friends, members of community — as an enriching if invariably painful event. Living in the isolation of nuclear families, knowing the loneliness of urban life and alienation of industrialism, we experience death merely as an individual's loss, a difficulty, a deprivation. The state, being the impersonal manager of society, mechanically registers it. Obituaries in the media offer only the privileged a final relief from anonymity; their eulogy is pressed into cold type. Capitalism, alone, seizes the occasion to eke out the last bit of profit from the remains of a once productive, often exploited worker: in North America, death — the funeral, the burial — is an industry. The situation aggravates our personal sorrows, while depriving the family and the community of their most valuable inheritance.

We are ceasing to view death for what in a large measure nature has intended it to be: a person's final, frequently lasting, gift to life. In recognition of this profound fact, the dead are still honoured, not merely mourned or memorialized in our culture. They link us to the

past and — by the example of their toil, courage, and compassion — give it meaning, bequeathing communities a continuous sense of history. Hence, among our people, deaths, like births, have been occasions for remembrances not for recording, for assessing one's heritage, for deepening our understanding of the transitoriness of life and the permanence of life.

I cherish a poignant memory of Rashed's response to death. In 1971 my younger brother, a personal friend and political comrade, was killed in an accident. At the funeral in Vancouver I was surprised by a Palestinian delegation bearing flowers and condolences from the PLO. Rashed had a hand in this thoughtful gesture. Months later, when I saw him in New York, Rashed said, 'Tell me about Saghir Ahmad. I want to learn from him.'

Like most of us, Rashed was caught between two cultures; one being the inherited — Islamic, Arab, Palestinian; the other alien — initiated by colonial encroachments, accented by exile. Unlike many of us, he belonged to only one culture, for he did not learn to compartmentalize them, to live separate lives — one in a private, interiorized world shared only by intimate friends; the other in the outside world, defined and dominated by alien, sometimes hostile, generally indifferent elements. He would mix up the two worlds often, making friends no less than acquaintances uncomfortable. He lived in New York City as though it were a Palestinian town; walked its streets with intimate ease, affecting an air of communal possession, smiling at pedestrians, greeting shop-owners and vendors as one would in Haifa or Jerusalem. 'Good morning. How are you?', Rashed greeted the restaurant manager the first time we had lunched together in 1968. The man was friendly: 'Fine, thank you.' 'And how is the family?' asked Rashed and literally waited for a response.

Hospitable and generous in our tradition, he was oblivious to the requirements of life in the metropolis and to the exigencies of his own situation. He would give sumptuous parties even when they entailed indebtedness, ply guests with 'one last drink' way past midnight even though tomorrow was a working day, bring friends gifts they did not want and he could not afford, start reciting a poem even if one had to catch a train. To live a life so much at odds with his actual environment induced a certain indulgence, an excess of altruism, a carelessness towards himself. His unusual gift for friendship assured him a wide range of devoted and durable friends. They would try helping him to 'adjust', be more 'realistic', 'practical', 'disciplined'. He would listen, gratifyingly, sometimes rally, raising expectations which were often disappointed. In his personal life Rashed suffered greatly from dispossession and exile; and his suffering aroused in us the most basic and repressed fears about ourselves. He drove to a certain distance those he cared for most. Yet Rashed never, to my knowledge, lost a friend.

In politics Rashed was different — careful, consistent and quite disciplined. A poet in the old tradition, messy and sentimental in private life, he was seemingly unsuited to be a PR man of the Palestinian movement. Yet he proved to be one of the very effective publicists of his people's struggle for self-determination. Not without reason. His life represented an almost complete Palestinian experience. He had lived in Israel, a second-class citizen, then in exile, and had been since 1968 an active member of the resistance. No one could easily dismiss Rashed as a fanatical ideologue, or an unthinking aparatchik. An independent-minded and critical intellectual, he was a principled and rigorous polemicist and a persuasive speaker. His commitment to Palestinian liberation was total; yet he had a remarkable understanding of, and compassion for, the Jewish people who had so overwhelmingly supported not only the Zionist colonization but also its continued expansion. With his knowledge of Hebrew, the experience of having lived the greater part of his life in Israel and his close social relations with Jews there, Rashed was one of the few Arab intellectuals to have first-hand knowledge of Israel, of the heartlessness as well as the humanity of the settler people who have colonized Palestine and largely cleared it of its native inhabitants. Perhaps because he had an intimate, though antagonistic, relationship with Israel, Rashed never wavered in his belief that only a socialist, binational state in Palestine offered the solution to the present impasse between the Jews and the Arabs.

Among the Arabs I know, Rashed had by far the most acute perceptions, the keenest understanding of the Israeli state and society. I learned much from him of the complex patterns of collective manipulation in Israel; of the ways in which messianism, fear, racism and, above all, deep social tensions and personal anxieties are transformed by the Zionist ideology and institutions into a self-righteous, seemingly inevitable, historically unavoidable expansionism. Perhaps because I shared his views, I thought Rashed was clearer than many of us on the dangers Israel represented for the future. He viewed as the Zionists' most important single enterprise their current drive to alienate the Soviet Jewry from its Russian patrimony. For, unless they can succeed in turning Russia against the Jews and the Jews against Russia, they shall be denied the second 'exodus' necessary for a rapid and complete colonization of 'Judea and Samaria'.

The possibility of the Zionists obtaining a second exodus of aliens into the fertile crescent seems as remote today as the prospects for the creation of a Zionist state in Palestine had appeared to the Arabs in the early 1900s. At our last meeting Rashed and I had talked of the similarities between Zionism's earlier enterprise and the present one — the complicity in it of Britain, then the paramount power, and of the United States now; the morbid tenacity with which the Arab

'notables' (e.g. Sherif Hussein and Feisal; King Khalid and Sadat) believed once in the British and now in the American government as a just, and even-handed arbiter; the equivocations and the parallel tracks which the Zionists and the imperial powers used to divide, confuse and dissipate Arab resistance. The most striking similarity, however, is the passivity with which Arabs have reacted to the Zionist drive for the emigration of Soviet Jewry. As they did after the Balfour Declaration, all that the Arab leaders are doing now is to make occasional noises and ineffectual representations against a well-articulated, internationally orchestrated, financially backed, politically aggressive, and diplomatically supported (by the US!) movement which threatens again to dispossess millions of Arabs from their ancient homelands in the fertile crescent. There is no parallel Arab movement, no consistent strategy, to counter the Zionist design. A week or so before he died, Rashed had phoned: 'Brother, this is a very serious matter. I want to do an interview with you for WAFA.' Our date was cancelled by his death.

Rashed made a conscious effort to apply his understanding of Israel to the practical task of improving the Palestinian strategy for liberation. He had the intellectual integrity, and understood the value of self-criticism enough to examine critically the ideological choices of the Palestinian movement.

I first met Rashed in 1968. At the annual convention of the Organization of Arab Students, I had spoken out critically of the Palestine Liberation movement's potential risks: it was shaping along the radical-heroic rather than the classical revolutionary model of armed struggle. Lacking a clandestine character, it was too visible; hence vulnerable to the pressures of 'friends' no less than the assaults of enemies. By assuming the character of a quasi-state-within-state before it ripens as a revolutionary movement, it might prematurely become the target of host governments, and a buffeted-about counter in inter-state Arab politics. By overemphasizing armed struggle, it might neglect the more crucial political tasks of morally isolating the Israeli state and of establishing meaningful, participatory links with the Palestinian people. Its failure to develop a consistent and functioning ideology and active participation of the Palestinian masses in the movement might ultimately exacerbate internal divisions while rendering it vulnerable to external manipulations.

My evaluation, primarily of Al-Fatah, which was then, as it is today, the most representative and the largest of Palestinian organizations, was intended not as mere criticism but as a basis for constructive proposals. But it was ill-timed, an instance of bad judgement. This was soon after the battle of Karemeh, at a time when the Palestinian liberation movement alone had stood up to restore the Arab people's trampled pride and shaken confidence. Many people were angered

by my talk; some had agreed. Rashed was among the few who evinced a genuine interest in my proposals, which included a revision of the Palestinian covenant to include a more clearly defined goal of bi-nationalism, a primary commitment to prevent the migration of Arab peoples out of the occupied territories and an internationally coordinated, vigorously protracted movement towards the Palestinian people's return to their homeland. 'Oh! I would like to be among the first on a ship to Haifa', Rashed had exclaimed. 'What shall they do? Return us, drown us, arrest us?' A twinkle in his eyes, a glow on his face.

When Amin al-Husseini died, Rashed thought of a massive funeral march from Amman to Jerusalem to bury the Mufti among his ancestors. He was serious. He also knew that a sustained attempt at Palestinian 'exodus' could be too profound to be viewed as political theatre, for simultaneously it could transform the nature of popular Palestinian participation in the struggle and force open the primary contradictions of the Zionist state and society. Above all, he found the idea emotionally compelling and believed that ordinary Palestinians shared his yearnings. Rashed wanted desperately to return home to Palestine, on his terms, with his people. Exile had been very hard on him.

Death fulfilled, at least partially, Rashed's most cherished dream. I was glad that he returned home to be buried, and that, much to the discomfort of the Israeli government, his funeral provided a memorable occasion for the outpouring of his people's emotion, symbolizing the sorrow and the determination of a dispossessed people.

EQBAL AHMAD

Proletet: Yiddish theatre in the 1930s

English trade unionists often argue that immigrant workers do not join trade unions or play an active part in the struggles of the working class. In the past three and a half years Broadside Mobile Workers' Theatre has learned just how false this argument is. Our play about lump labour in the building industry put us in touch with many militant shop stewards, most of them Irish. Our play about racialism has been performed for Asian workers at Grunwick and for the Garner Steak House strikers. In hotels and hospitals, in factories and on building sites, despite great obstacles immigrant workers are in the thick of the struggle and often way out in front.

Our contact with these workers has taught us something else: every group of immigrants has brought with them a rich cultural heritage. In Southall we have been invited to speak to and perform for the

Punjabi Progressive Writers' Association. We were amazed and delighted to observe a large group of engineers, post office workers, teachers, librarians, journalists, etc., coming together to discuss and criticize each other's novels, poems, songs and short stories. In Camden we performed in support of Theatro Technic, a thriving centre for the Greek Cypriot community where the classics are performed alongside plays about contemporary political and social problems in Cyprus, Greece and Britain. Our play about Portugal, *We Have the Power of the Winds*, was written with the help of members of the Portuguese Workers' Co-ordinating Committee. A group from the April 25th Centre has translated it into Portuguese and has been performing it; eventually they hope to make their own plays about the problems of immigrant workers.

This interest in the arts on the part of immigrants is not just nostalgia for home or a minority in a hostile environment turning in on itself. They do not just maintain an old folk or classical tradition. They apply and adapt that tradition in order to help their own community make sense of their new environment, and in order to change it. Their culture is a dynamic and progressive, even a revolutionary one.

This activity contrasts sadly with our experience of urban English workers who, for the most part have lost touch with their own rich cultural heritage. Brought up on a sickly diet of Sinatra and situation comedy, their taste buds dulled by years of cultural Readybrek, their prejudices reinforced by sexist and racist 'entertainers', their ears deafened by the ever louder decibels of rock, their skins thickened by celluloid violence both simulated and real, they have been sold an alien culture, the culture of the ruling class. Their own genuine expressions have been swallowed up, distorted, disinfected, sanded down and sold back to them. The only alternatives to this so-called popular culture served up by the establishment are incomprehensible or irrelevant museum pieces accessible only to a small elite. The word 'sold' is important, for like everything else in capitalist society culture too is a commodity, a profitable one.

But 'popular' culture has another function: it reinforces the status quo, it lulls people into passivity, it dulls the critical faculties. She must not see the contradictions in the capitalist system, he must not see what unites him with his fellow workers and divides him from his employer.

The state of working-class culture is a good indicator of the health of the movement, but it is more than just a reflection. Richard Stourac, a member of Broadside, has been researching the history of the German, Russian and British workers' theatres of the 1920s and 1930s.[1] In Germany, where the movement was most developed, the workers' theatre made an enormous contribution to the revolutionary struggle. Hundreds of groups recruited hundreds of thousands of new

members to the Communist Party and other revolutionary organisations, helped sell Party literature, and raise funds. But, most importantly, they raised the consciousness of millions of male and female workers, of the youth and even the peasants. This theatre was a weapon, a tool, it activated its audiences, sharpened their critical senses, exposing the contradictions in the system, boosted their morale and united them against their real enemies. It was truly 'entertaining'.

In Britain too, from 1926 to 1936 there was a small but active Workers' Theatre Movement.[2] Proltet, a Yiddish-speaking group, was one of the best. In the following article, I will look at their practice, and its implications for immigrants and minority groups concerned to preserve and develop their own dynamic, potentially revolutionary culture. But I hope that this small slice of history will prove useful to British workers too, in encouraging them to develop their own forms of expression, and in understanding and appreciating the importance of immigrant cultures.

The origins of Proltet

I came in 1929 from Poland, and I didn't like what I have seen in the East End of London when I was about 18 years old ... I wasn't nationalistic but I loved my culture, my literature, my progressive life, my education which I had in Poland. And I thought I can be of help to the Jewish people in the East End of London ... I thought the theatre is the best way to educate people ... the theatre is like a looking glass, I never looked in a looking glass at the time, but I looked at the theatre and I learned a lot. From the looking glass I could only learn about my face, but from the theatre and from culture I could learn how to build a better future.[3] *Fegal Firestein*

Proltet was founded by a small group of young Polish Jews who came to Britain in the late twenties. They were skilled or semi-skilled tailors, dressmakers, cabinetmakers, hairdressers, shop assistants or office workers, but they had had some education and had been influenced by the Russian revolution. Fegal Firestein was 'doing the good work' before she was 15 and had been arrested many times before she left Poland to study in England. In the sweat shops of the East End she found a cultural impoverishment to match the material poverty all around, and a widening chasm between parents who spoke Yiddish and their English-speaking offspring who knew nothing of Eastern Europe. The older people attended the Jewish Workers' Circle at Alie Street, founded around 1911 as a friendly society, but also a social and cultural centre.

To attract the young Fegal and her friends, Alec Waterman and Alf Holland founded the Progressive Youth Circle. They organized

lectures and discussions on such subjects as women's rights, free love, Zionism, communism, the history of the British trade unions and of the Jewish people. The young people came, and so did their elders. The Youth Circle led to the re-activation of a school for Yiddish, and the establishment of a literary section where the works of the Yiddish writers like Sholom Aleichem and Peretz, and progressive English and American writers, like Shaw and Dreiser, were read and discussed. Since some of those who attended were illiterate, the stories were frequently read aloud or even dramatized. Rae Waterman says the characters were actually 'put on trial as a way of studying the writer in depth'. [4] Proltet emerged as a natural consequence. They began by performing scenes by established dramatists as well as their own sketches in the Large Hall at the Workers' Circle and for the Notting Hill branch of the Circle. They also started to go out to the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union. Fegal Firestein takes up the story:

That trade union was only a question of getting work a little bit better ... They worked just the same, ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day, they had no cultural education in the union itself, they used to come and play dominoes. They didn't understand why they should work sixteen or seventeen hours a day ... A trade union leader explained to them, maybe in a class conscious way, but not in a way where they can start to understand themselves ... So a group of us dressed up like workers and we got on the stage and we explained why a strike takes place and what means a strike: action, and the working people ... demanding better conditions which Grunwick is doing now ... That's why I say the past and future always connects. We tried to show how useful it is to learn from working people all over the world. But mostly we wanted to get rid of the dirt in the little workshops and in the union itself.

At that time our aim was to bring a socialist system, but ... some of us were illegal in this country, and some of us were not allowed to work and some of us depended on the families we stayed with. We had to be very careful. I myself had to go back every week to the police station to report that I'm not working.

Whatever we done they saw their own life, they just woke up and saw what they've gone through in this country and why we are calling out 'Strike!' Before, it never occurred to them that a strike is a kind of a weapon for better conditions. They just opened their eyes and realized.

We done a sketch by another Jewish person, it's called 'The Three Sisters' ... There were three girls, they're working all their lives in small workshops, in any country, in Poland, in America, and they make quite nice dresses, according to 1920s scene, and they sit at the machines and they sing a song: 'We make dresses for

everybody but we haven't got one.' And it was done simple, we didn't dress up as actors or anything, just sitting at the machines and talking... Some of the women came over to me and said, 'Well, we are dressmakers, but there is no union for that.' ... I told them, 'Well, why don't you speak to Mr Fine, he's the organizer for the men, he might set up a section for you women as well.' And it happened, they started a dressmaking union.

'Strike!' by Michael Gold was Proltet's first production. Alf Holland translated it into Yiddish and, according to Rae Waterman, 'It was performed with great verve to enthusiastic audiences... actors were dispersed among the audience to shout "Strike, strike!" rhythmically to those on stage and were often indignantly shushed by those not in the know.'

It wasn't long before the liveliness and inventiveness of the Proltet group attracted the attention of the Workers' Theatre Movement (WTM) which invited them to join. Rae Waterman believes that Proltet was the only WTM group performing exclusively indoors, since only a minority of street audiences would have understood Yiddish.

This distinction apart, Proltet modelled itself entirely on the agitprop style of the English-speaking groups. Both sexes wore the navy bib-and-brace overalls and white shirt to symbolize their sense of identity and solidarity with the working class, and also the concept of the Propertyless Theatre for the Propertyless Class. The slogan was adopted for practical reasons (think how costumes and props would have hampered our quick get-away in Hackney Fields).* But like other useful and pithy slogans it hardened into a dogmatic principle. Proltet's performances being given indoors, where lighting and furniture were available, touches of naturalism inevitably crept in, and there was heated argument over a sketch collectively written, where the judge was given a wig, the prisoner bloodied bandage and the policeman a helmet.[5]

According to Philip Poole, Secretary of the WTM, Proltet were actually threatened with expulsion from the Movement for this infringement of a cardinal principle.

Proltet and Workers' Theatre Movement

But the controversy over props was not the only one between Proltet

*Rae Waterman was herself a member of an English-speaking group of the WTM, the Red Radio. This is a reference to a performance in Hackney Fields, 'where we were once pelted with over-ripe tomatoes (not then in the luxury class). We retired in disarray to clean up, deciding that the young workers we had hoped to inspire were not yet ready for our message.'

and the WTM. The WTM's *Monthly Bulletin* of February 1933 published this critique of 'Strike!' by the National Bureau of the Central Committee. It was performed as part of the eighth All-London Show, which the Committee felt was, as a whole, 'a great deal poorer than previous shows'.

STRIKE: Extremely effective performance — but slogans from crowd ragged and at times hysterical. Criticism of political line of sketch is overdue. Syndicalist in tendency; line is that 'strike' is the only necessity. Role of revolutionary party ignored, as well as all forms of mass-activity other than strike (influence of Industrial Workers of the World.) Worship of the individual leader (petty-bourgeois ideology.) Sketch reflects period of 'prosperity' in America when it was written; could be improved by making it deal with present-day realities in England (crisis, unemployment, dole-cuts, as well as wage-cuts.)

Recommend: That group be asked to initiate political discussion on weaknesses of sketch and collectively make its content equal to their performance.

An even stronger condemnation of the sketch was made in the January issue of the *Monthly Bulletin* by B. Woodward, who wrote that 'The sketch "Strike!" should be banished from WTM repertoire ... a greatly over-rated sketch ... production full of faults ...' The Prolet group replied as follows:

Indeed, Comrade Woodward! This is the first we've heard of it! As a production it has been acclaimed by all, including the Central Committee of WTM (See December issue of *Monthly Bulletin*.) Its tremendous dramatic appeal, coupled with its attractive form (audience feeling itself part of play) make it (in our opinion) one of the most valuable of WTM sketches. We are all agreed that its political line needs altering, and this we are now engaged in doing.

But Woodward made another criticism which had more serious implications and led the Prolet group to write a lengthy open letter to the *Monthly Bulletin*. Woodward had written:

The playing of two sketches in Jewish was bad, in fact, speaking in Jewish is unnecessary. I have had several complaints about this, some from Jewish comrades. They say that only some very old Jews do not understand English, and as our object is to reach as many workers as possible, we defeat our purpose by presenting Yiddish sketches.

Prolet answered:

Comrade Woodward and his Jewish friends need to learn a little more about the Jewish question before dismissing so lightly the

need for a Jewish revolutionary force, of which Proletet is but the nucleus. First of all, it is untrue that only old Jews do not understand English. We have ourselves seen that our audiences are composed of young and middle-aged as well as old Jews. Even if we played to old people only, isn't it a fact that parents to a certain extent influence their children? However, that is by the way. Here are some real facts.

In every capitalist country exist reactionary Jewish agencies which exercise great influence on the Jewish masses. In London alone where there are 150,000 Jews, of which the majority are workers, two Jewish reactionary newspapers have a joint daily circulation of about 100,000. This seems to prove that at least 100,000 Jews are sufficiently interested in their own language as to read a Jewish newspaper every day. These papers play the same part in influencing the minds of their Jewish readers as the English capitalist press, pouring out streams of anti-working class propaganda in general, and National-chauvinistic sentiments in particular. It must be realized that the Jewish people are more liable to be attracted by this nationalist propaganda, because of their position as a national minority.

In addition, there is in Britain a powerful Zionist movement, which, by pretending that all our troubles will be over if we only go to Palestine (under the protection of British guns) prevents Jewish workers from realizing their fundamental unity with their non-Jewish class brothers, and that the solution of their particular problem will come with the solving of the workers' problems, as in Russia today, after a working-class revolution.

It is interesting in this connection, to note that the Chief Rabbi, Dr Hertz, at a recent meeting in Shoreditch Town Hall, stated that the Jews under the Soviet Government were worse off than under the Spanish Inquisition, because under the latter regime, in spite of their bodies being tortured, their faith was kept alive whilst under the former, although they had physical freedom, their faith was being destroyed. Thereby implying that the Chief Rabbi would rather see the Jews pogromed and suppressed than playing their part in industry and culture as in the Soviet Union. Thus does the Jewish reaction play its part in the general campaign against the Soviet Union. To be brief, wherever there is reaction, it needs to be fought, and fought in its own language. Except for our comrades in the unions (reformist and revolutionary) and the Committee in Aid of Jewish Colonization in USSR, there is at present no Jewish revolutionary movement in existence. We think the above remarks prove not only the justification, but the crying need for Proletet's existence. Our future work is going to be concentrated on sketches to combat this reaction.

The editor of the *Monthly Bulletin* supported this stance, stating that 'There is now no room for the doubts which some comrades entertained about the usefulness of a Yiddish group.' In fact these doubts were not extinguished. When we asked Charles Mann, leader of the Lewisham Red Players and editor of the *Red Stage*, the organ that preceded the *Monthly Bulletin*, his opinion of Proltet he replied:

Nationalistic, separatist... pro-Jewish rather than putting the Jewish question into the struggle ... I thought they should be more on the Common Front. Their work was excellent, their precision, their competence... [but] they always emphasized the Jewish question.[7]

When we asked Fegal Firestein about this debate she remembered Mann's opposition:

Tom Mann's son Charlie Mann ... He became a bit critical of the Jewish theatre, and most of the Party leaders became a bit critical, not because they had anything personal against us, but a misunderstanding, even among Communists ... and they forget there are enough people in this country which need the help of the language they speak. That's when the discussion started that we've got to adapt ourselves to the English way of ... I think one of our members took it very serious, and that was Alec. Even when he was a leading member of the Party he always brought up the Jewish problem, it was always on the table with him and that's why I appreciated his work. He always saw that where there are a people living in a country and they've got a language and a culture, they've got a job to protect it, and even though they say now the Jewish language is dead, the Jewish books are not read ... I still say when there is one good classic left we will still exist as a community of people.

Fegal remembers trying to write a sketch about the kind of Palestine they wanted to see. Proltet believed that Palestine belonged to the Arabs.

Our argument was if Jews want to emigrate it shouldn't be the British government to tell them if they can or they can't go. What we don't want is that they should take over the land from the Arabs.

Proltet insisted on performing in Yiddish not only because there were quite a few Jewish immigrants who spoke no English, but also because they were determined to preserve their own language and culture, and because as anti-Zionists, they had to 'let the Jewish people know that we are not anti-Jewish'. Their concern to combat Zionism and the reactionary Jewish press, which provided immigrants with news of family and friends around the world, and was therefore very influential, was obviously not understood by some members of

the British WTM. Perhaps they underestimated the strength of reaction among these immigrants (the Firesteins claimed there were Jews in the East End who would have welcomed the fascists) or the importance of providing an alternative to Zionism.

WTM's insistence that the Yiddish group should perform in English certainly seems odd in light of their stress on internationalism. This may have been due to ignorance of the problems Proletet faced in trying to work among their own people; it may be that the WTM was infected by the growing dogmatism of the international communist movement, and their preoccupation with major contradictions blinded them to minor ones. A group performing in another language would certainly have been more difficult for the centre to control. It may have been simply intolerance, a touch of 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do'.

But the charge of separatism or an over-emphasis on the Jewish question just doesn't stick. For example, one of Proletet's sketches was about railway workers. As Mrs Firestein explains:

there were no Jewish railworkers. We didn't isolate ourselves as a Jewish group, but we done it in the Jewish language for Jewish people, we wanted the Jewish people of the East End to understand what's going on in the rest of England, in Russia or Poland ...

On the other hand, if they were going to expose exploitation they had to relate to the everyday experience of Jewish immigrants:

Fegel: We had Jewish bosses, and the Jewish bosses at that time had the ... [she gestures to indicate the curls in front of the ears] and a different hat entirely.

Q: So you never portrayed a typical British boss!

Fegel: Oh no, we never had a Mr Ward [sic] on the stage. We didn't know there were such bosses with evening suits and top hats, we only knew about our Jewish bosses.

Looking after the revolution

But Proletet had to contend not just with economic and political questions, but with social ones as well. The estrangement between parents and children Fegel Firestein had noticed affects every group of immigrants. As a new arrival who spoke no English she could understand the pain of the older people:

We used to criticize sometimes in our sketches the youth the way they ignored their parents ... I'm not religious at all, but I used to go with my friend on Friday night or on a Jewish holiday to the East End of London to watch the Jewish youth. (I used to live in Stamford Hill.) They wouldn't ride in buses, but they walked from Whitechapel Station to the Bank, walked there and walked back.

And we tried to imagine what that walk meant to her and how much better it would be if she would sit down and speak to the mother in her broken English, and explain to her, talk to the mother. And we tried to make a sketch, like a family sketch what means family life, and lots of it we pinched from Engels... We made a sketch about a Jewish family, one of their children gets involved marrying out of religion. We used to do sketches about the problems of the people, to be helpful to the community, to show that things can be altered, it can be different from the way they've been told this is their life... You've got to live in a slum house in the East End... the flats can be better, and the lives of the children and the mothers and father as well... A workers' theatre should stand for that... wherever a group of housewives who haven't got a lot of time or anything there should always be a workers' theatre for them at any time, at any hour, and they should go and they should always have their own life in front of them, a mother should have in front of her in action how to bring up her children, a child should be breast-fed or not, everyday problems.

Fegel Firestein's approach could have been dismissed as mere 'social work'. But this was certainly not the case.

To me, without culture politics had no basis... the social revolution meant... educating the mass of the peasants and the workers... what they've done first the revolutionaries, they started to cultivate the peasants, they told women to pick up dirt from the floors... Because the revolution was started already, and they wanted the people to get cultivated... to look after the revolution. And that's why you need workers' theatres...

In spite of a somewhat stormy relationship Proltet was certainly respected by the rest of the WTM. Andre van Gyseghem, the professional producer working with the Rebel Players, offered to help produce their 'Finf-Yor-Plan' (Five Year Plan) with which they won a national competition along with Charlie Mann's group the Red Players. The prize was a place in the British delegation to the Moscow Olympiad of Workers' Theatres in 1933. But unfortunately, as they were all immigrants, they were afraid if they left the country they would not be allowed back into Britain. So they sent their secretary, British-born Philip Firestein, Fegel's future husband, who had been enlisted to handle correspondence and help with translations, and who, as he spoke no Yiddish, was restricted to playing in crowd scenes or acting policemen in sketches like 'Law and Order'. (Philip: 'We tried to say that there is a law for the rich and a law for the poor.' Fegel: 'And the sketch worked very well with the Jewish people because of the way they were treated when they came into the country.' In the Soviet Union Philip Firestein was amazed to discover

a highly-polished professional Jewish theatre supported and patronized by the Red Army as well as a widespread amateur Jewish theatre movement, which in Moscow shared a building with the tramway workers.

The British delegation did not do well in the Olympiad competition. 'They said we were amateurs, our plays were too raw, we kept shouting slogans all the time ...' When they returned the conflicts which had been brewing for years between those who put politics first and those who were more interested in theatre as such came to a head. The result was the decline of the WTM and the birth of Unity Theatre.

Proltet too dissolved. According to Rae Waterman:

Its members were dispersing, some to other countries, some, through marriage and the setting up of new homes, to distant parts of London; and some through pressure of other political tasks as Fascism grew more threatening. Moreover, the group of immigrants who were its core was too small to compete with or resist the natural process of absorption into the all-pervasive culture of the host country.

For the time being the massive waves of Jewish immigration appeared to be over. Fegal Firestein and her friends had themselves learned English and a few of them may have joined English-speaking groups or become active in Unity. But the interest was still there. In late 1937 a theatre was founded at the Workers' Circle. It affiliated to the Left Book Club Theatre Guild in 1938 and was awarded both prizes offered at a National Festival of the Guild, one of which was for the best mass declamation. The group had forty members in its heyday and was invited to perform (in English) all over London and the home counties. But its members were of military age and, with the onset of war, the theatre collapsed, to be replaced when peace came by Stepney Unity Theatre Group.[8]

The lessons of Proltet

What is the relevance of the Proltet experience for us today? To begin with, there is the extremely important reminder, 'Wherever there is reaction, it needs to be fought, and fought in its own language.' Racial minorities may suffer discrimination and exploitation, but that doesn't mean they automatically or immediately turn to socialism for the solution to their problems. To the ambitious the prospect of owning one's own business may seem a quicker and easier way out of the ghetto. The position of women, relations between parents and children, religion and even racism are only a few of the issues which must be raised from within.

Immigrants who settle here permanently eventually learn English and their children speak with English accents. But for new arrivals, for migrant labourers, for the old, for women isolated in the home, their native language is still the means by which they communicate. These groups should not be ignored, nor should the obvious desire and need of immigrants to preserve their own language and culture be seen as 'separatist'. Working-class unity will not come through a process of anglicization or even homogenization but through a recognition and appreciation of our differences, as well as our common interests. Besides, the working class as a whole would be a great deal poorer without the cultural contribution made by immigrants. Unfortunately, there are many on the left for whom culture is not a serious question. Some see it as a deviation from the 'real' struggle, others as 'entertainment' or at best a way to brighten up a dull meeting or raise funds. This leads to glaring contradictions like sexist rock bands performing for a National Abortion Campaign benefit.

The Proltet group was a living example of the different levels on which 'art' can further the struggle for socialism. They produced agitation and propaganda in an immediate, comprehensible and engaging form. This is enormously important in itself. But they didn't just deal with work, the bosses, exploitation, the trade unions. They looked at family life, the rifts between parents and children, religion, the problems of young people. They tried to project the possibility of a better life. And they encouraged a critical interest in literature and learning. As Fegel Firestein said, 'They wanted the people to get cultivated to look after the revolution.'

The revolution will not look after itself. If revolutionaries ignore the question of culture they do not simply leave a vacuum. Ruling-class ideology creeps in, the conditioning process goes on. In the early 1930s a German agitprop group called Stormtroupe Alarm described this process with deadly accuracy in their parody 'Proletarian Self-Criticism'.^[9] It deals with the family life of three workers dominated by petit-bourgeois attitudes, ideas and culture. There is the father Krause, head of the family and tyrant of the house ...

... with a flat full of knick-knacks — a gold embroidered picture of two angels with the daily blessing inscribed thereon over the conjugal bed, a Venus in the loo, Lenin hanging lonely on the wall amongst nationalist military orders and wedding presents. But in the bar Krause is a Socialist, sweats class struggle, and curses bourgeois rubbish. Usually he eats himself sick, is pious and devout. It's not lip that counts, but practice!

The next verse juxtaposes Lehmann's home life — his wife reading cheap love stories and dreaming of marrying the Baron, Lehmann

himself listening to schmaltzy music — with his public bar talk of proletarian culture. The third verse shows how Schulze's daughter is moving up the ladder through her marriage to a civil servant. She hurriedly rejoins the church so she can have a church wedding. Schulze gets drunk at the celebration, bawls the 'Internationale' and beats his wife — an act in marked contrast with his pub speeches about women's rights. The last verse sums up:

Schulze, Lehmann, Krause — you can see them in your own homes — you can't win the class struggle with church, schnapps, and incense. Fight stultification with proletarian culture. It's not the lip that counts, we want to *live* according to our principles.

Broadside Mobile Workers' Theatre
London

KATHLEEN MCCREERY

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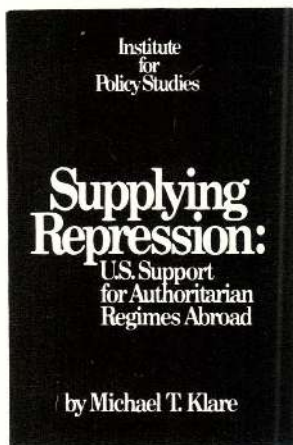


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Book reviews

La plus haute des solitudes

By TAHAR BEN JALLOUN (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1978). 172pp. Fr. Fr.32

This book, by a Moroccan psychiatric social worker, addresses the sexual problems of male immigrant workers from North Africa in France. The author understands their problems in the economic context of colonialism and capitalism; he discusses both the oppressive experiences of the older men under French rule and the persistent hardships that drive younger men to continue to seek work abroad.

Conditions of life and work in France are brutal for the often illiterate immigrant whose knowledge of French may be limited. Deprived of the support of the extended family and buffeted by the daily humiliations of a pervasive racism, many are reduced to a state of sexual impotence and forced to seek psychiatric help. Ben Jalloun explains the special importance North African Moslems attach to sexual potency, how their identities are in fact dependent on their ability to procreate and carry on the agnatic line.

In a series of vignettes, we are introduced to some thirty workers who speak not only of the material but also the spiritual poverty of their lives in France. Since most of them emigrate without their wives, relations with women are reduced to five-minute sessions in brothels, which few can afford more than once or twice a month. For the religious, this transgression inspires such guilt that Ben Jalloun often felt the men were asking his permission to indulge. For the sensitive, this commercial and often sordid encounter does nothing to assuage their need for love and tenderness.

This book has created quite a stir in Paris; it has made the French aware of the privations and preoccupations of this most exploited proletariat in their midst, and it squarely indicts them for the racism that makes life so bitter. Perhaps the most moving and vivid biography is that of an older Algerian who lives with a young Frenchwoman. When they have a child, they are thrown out of their lodgings, and in their search for other accommodation are treated to the vilest expressions of prejudice imaginable.

For all that it exposes an important issue long under the silence of a taboo, this book fails the very people about and for whom it is written by stopping short of suggesting constructive solutions. Ben Jalloun never questions the status quo of North African society. He never asks whether a man's worth should be judged by his ability to have an erection. Worse, he never looks at the obverse, the terrible oppression of North African women. Instead of suggesting that these men reject the archaic social strictures that imprison them, Ben Jalloun encourages them to frequent prostitutes, thus perpetuating their schizoid view of women as good wives and mothers or bad street-walkers and whores. Never has it been made so clear that men's progress is dependent on women's liberations.

Nor does Ben Jalloun speak of social or political association among men as a source of relief from loneliness or redress for racial persecution. In these pages there are no working men's clubs, no benevolent funds, no mutual aid societies for men to turn to, let alone trade unions or political parties. Ben Jalloun seems content to blame French colonialism and capitalism, but in doing so he is condemning his patients to wait passively for the system to change. He mentions in passing the role of national bourgeoisies in perpetuating the conditions that make emigration an economic necessity, but nowhere suggests that immigrant workers might organize against their rule.

Instead, Ben Jalloun suggests that his clients find relief in masturbation. That indeed is '*la plus haute des solitudes.*'

Washington, DC

MEREDETH TURSHEN

A public library service for ethnic minorities in Great Britain

By E. CLOUGH and J. QUARMBY (London, Library Association, 1978). 369pp. £14.50 (£11.60 to L.A. members)

Speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil. The authors of this volume have obviously taken the old adage to heart. Only librarians with their tradition of non-involvement could pretend to discuss 'ethnic minorities' in Britain today without even mentioning racism (except as an 'absurdity' in their prefatory quote to the whole book). And

only by ignoring racism can they pretend that there is no qualitative difference between the experiences of the Poles (who figure rather more prominently in this work than one would expect ... probably because there are such concrete things as the Polish Library to write about) and the experiences of say West Indians or Asians. Thus they eschew concentration on these 'numerically larger minorities', preferring to concentrate on the 'ethnic mix' of the country as a whole — yet an ethnic mix which excludes, among others, Irish migrants on the grounds that 'no statistics are available'. Neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring.

Except that the book as a whole is a red herring, inadequate and ill-conceived, pointing the way to nothing very much and resounding with obvious pieties about the need to provide library services to the whole community: they 'must adapt themselves to the changing needs of ... society', public libraries have 'an important role ... in countering prejudice'. All this while the authors' own comments sometimes betray an embarrassing mixture of racism and paternalism. Thus (of the West Indian community):

This growing sense of identity has shown itself in the assurance of West Indians that a black skin is something they share with Africans and is a matter of pride and in that many West Indians have gone natural in their hair styles instead of straightening it in the Western fashion, but the most significant result has been that whereas they formerly regarded West Africans [sic] as savages they are now widely recognised as brothers sharing a common heritage ... It would be very much to be regretted if this community [the West Indians] were to be increasingly isolated in this way as they have a great deal to give not only through their skills and labour but because as a people they are adaptable and irrepressible, with a natural ebullience that shows itself in street carnivals, in cricket matches and their highly original music and literature.

Although the authors speak of the need for the 'public library to counter racial prejudice by the care it shows in the book provision it makes', claiming that it is 'eminently reasonable to expect librarians to eschew the grossly biased and factually inaccurate, as well as those books which are likely to exacerbate racial tension', they reserve a curious outburst of passion for those who actually do attempt to counter racism and prejudice in literature, speaking of 'librarians, teachers and community workers who believe that there is a racist under every book and this leads to an obsessive anti-racism which can also be unhealthy and result in the production of lists of undesirable books'. It is doubtful, however, to say the least whether librarians, teachers, et al would have been aware as they are (and overall that is not much) without the work of committed anti-racists.

The authors both say and unsay (or, more accurately allow to be said and unsaid — they rarely give their own judgments except in the form of platitudes) a great number of things. Thus they quote with what would appear to be equal approbation those teachers and librarians who are convinced that children should not be taught or encouraged to read books in their own dialects and their own vernacular (dialect being deemed to interfere with the establishment of a 'well-based multicultural society'), and such authorities as the Bullock report: 'Certainly the school should adopt a positive attitude to its pupils' bi-lingualism and wherever possible should help deepen and maintain their knowledge of their mother tongues.'

The book falls into three sections. Much of the first, purporting to be on the background of various minority groups, is taken up with far too many statistics, boringly presented, culled from previously published sources and, despite the Chairman of the CRE's assertion to the contrary, far more accessible elsewhere (not least in the CRE's own fact sheets). The central section is taken up with the results (computer analysed every which way) of a questionnaire distributed through a number of London library authorities to their black, brown and other non-native users. Since the bulk of the effort was aimed at library users (who must already have found a certain degree of satisfaction from the service, otherwise they would not return), it was in that sense already speaking only to the converted. And was all this effort really necessary to learn that small and inadequate collections of material in the vernacular language are small and inadequate, and those who read in those languages want improvement? And that more books by black writers were demanded, more 'black studies', less ethnocentrism in the choice of material for the library as a whole? We at this Institute in the discussions organized for Mr Clough and Miss Quarmbay with black youth workers, a publisher and educationalists took that as a starting point for discussion — but evidently to no avail.

At times, the survey findings degenerate into farce. One African respondent, who could not read English but whose first reading language is a West African language, became a whole sub-category of his group, amounting to 2.6 per cent of the total. Ten Greek respondents who read a category A English newspaper became a grand 79.6 per cent of their total.

The authors scarcely even begin to tackle the question of the library's irrelevance to non-users, and what steps could be undertaken to tackle needs that are suspected but nowhere beginning to be met. At one point, lack of use by the West Indian community in particular was dismissed by one librarian on the grounds that they are largely a working-class population and the working class do not use libraries anyway. The authors cite this without comment.

Some authorities are — however tardily and inadequately — beginning to make some provision for the minorities in their midst, still

mainly in the field of provision of materials in Asian languages, and Clough and Quarmby have, in their latter section, painstakingly rounded all this up, polished it and set it on display. There is, however, very little critical analysis or discussion of these various enterprises, the authors being mainly content with description peppered with 'it is hoped' or 'it is firmly believed' when commenting on the success of such projects.

The most practically useful sections of the book are the appendices listing booksellers, suppliers and publishers: it is to be hoped that these will be made available as offprints, regularly updated and widely circulated. Much of the rest can be dispensed with.

Institute of Race Relations

HAZEL WATERS

Antonio Maceo: The 'Bronze Titan' of Cuba's struggle for independence

By PHILIP S. FONER (New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1977). 340pp. \$15.00/£8.75

Our America: writings on Latin America and the struggle for Cuban independence

By JOSE MARTI, edited by PHILIP S. FONER (New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1977). 448pp. \$16.50/£9.75

'Millions in Peru on brink of starvation' (*Guardian*, 8 July 1978). 'Why the US is eyeing the Cuban Showcase' (*Guardian*, 10 July 1978). These two headlines, two days apart, are, on the one hand, a graphic reminder of the consequences of colonialism for the mass of people in the underdeveloped world, and, on the other, an indication of the potential for development once a nation has broken out of the international capitalist system. The crucial questions facing us are what retards and what facilitates such a breakthrough?

Although both Marti and Maceo, leaders of the independence struggle, died in 1895 and 1896 respectively, during Cuba's second war for independence, and hence before the imposition of American imperialism, there is much here that can help answer those questions. Both were committed to the attainment of genuine independence for Cuba and had learned from the history of the rest of Latin America and from Cuba's own first war for independence. Marti differentiated between 'first independence' and 'second independence': the former brings independence from direct imperialist control, the latter from indirect neo-colonial control. The former had been achieved by the Latin American republics between 1819 and 1825, but had still to be won by Cuba. The latter had still to be won throughout Latin America because it had fallen under the semi-colonial control of Britain and, to a lesser extent, other metropolitan

centres. Martí's goal for Cuba was the attainment of both forms of independence which would help bring about the 'second independence' by all Latin America.

The fundamental link between the class nature of these societies and the maintenance of semi-colonial dependency was identified by both leaders as crucial to changing the nature of the independence movement in the 1880s and 1890s — particularly in the light of the failures of the Ten Years War (1868-78). A measure of their success can be judged in the following despatch by a North American reporter, Richard Harding Davis, which Foner quotes in his introduction to *Our America*:

The last revolution was organized by the aristocrats; the present one is a revolution of the *pueblo*, and, while the principal Cuban families are again among the leaders, with them now are representatives of the 'plain people', and the cause is now a common cause in working for the success of which all classes are desperately in earnest.

As opposed to those aristocrats (the Creole large landowning class which, determined to maintain its own dominance, had held back and ultimately sabotaged the struggle of the Ten Years War), Martí and Maceo stressed the importance of the poor and the blacks to the cause. They encouraged their involvement and challenged the racism which had not only dominated much of the leadership in the first war, but had indeed, played a negative role in the second war after Martí's death — even limiting the supplies and equipment provided to Maceo and other black generals. Martí saw the working people as 'the backbone of our coalition' and wrote movingly about their commitment:

When all the years spent in hope and despair by the Cuban emigres are considered; when the constant and unending sacrifice of the exiles is remembered; when the constant pain of existence has taught the real value of money earned with one's own hands; when one knows that every cent taken from them is one less pleasure for their children, less medicine for the ill, less food on the family table — one cannot but read with profound respect the following words in a letter from Ocala: 'From this date on we will contribute from our humble wages the insignificant sum of twenty-five cents for the revolution for the independence of our fatherland Cuba.'

But elsewhere they recognized elements, primarily among the economic elites, willing to welcome the United States into Cuba and/or to welcome annexation to the United States. In Martí's words, 'All the timid ones, all the irresolute, all those attached to wealth, have marked temptations to support this solution which they believe will cost them little.' Maceo put it this way:

From Spain I never expected anything. She always despised us, and it would be undignified to think otherwise. Liberty is won with the edge of the machete; it is not asked for. To beg for rights is the domain of cowards incapable of exercising these rights. Neither do I expect anything from the [North] Americans. We must depend on our own efforts. It is better to rise or fall without help than to contract debts of gratitude to a neighbor so powerful.

Several months before his death he wrote that 'only if the final triumph is achieved without this [U.S.] foreign intervention will it bring us complete happiness'. And Marti succinctly asked: 'And once the United States is in Cuba, who will drive it out?'

Their struggle was part of an international struggle. The general-in-chief of the Cuban revolutionary army, Maximo Gomez, a Santo Domingan, was only the most prominent of many Latin Americans who fought for Cuban independence. The first article of the Cuban Revolutionary Party declared that it 'has been formed to achieve absolute independence for the island of Cuba, and to aid and encourage that of Puerto Rico'. Marti in his last letter, written before his death in battle in 1895, declared:

I am in danger of giving my life for my country and duty. It is my duty — inasmuch as I realize it and have the spirit to fulfil it — to prevent, by the independence of Cuba, the United States from spreading over the West Indies and falling, with that added weight, upon other lands of Our America. All I have done up to now, and shall do hereafter, is to that end ... I have lived inside the monster and know its entrails — and my weapon is only the slingshot of David.

Over half a century later, an independent Cuba honours that same spirit of internationalism.

Manchester

L. KUSHNICK

Class, race, and worker insurgency: the League of Revolutionary Black Workers

By JAMES A. GESCHWENDER (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1977). 250pp. Cloth £6.50, paper £2.50.

Detroit, I do mind dying: a study in urban revolution

By DAN GEORGAKAS and MARVIN SURKIN (New York, St Martin's Press, 1976). 250pp.

Both of these books deal with the same subject matter — the emergence in the late 1960s of radical black workers' groups in

several Detroit car factories and the subsequent formation (and eventual demise) of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Both books are sympathetically written, drawing heavily on the participants' own accounts of events, and display a sense of radical commitment on the part of their authors. Both interpret the development of the black workers' movement within the heartland of American monopoly capitalism as a highly significant, if problematic, event.

Of the two books, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying* is by far the better. Written as a piece of radical reportage, with the imaginative use of photographs, quotes, poems, songs, etc., it immerses the reader in the flow of events and provides a sense of time and place in which to interpret them. This is due in part to the fact that the book does not confine itself to the events surrounding the League of Revolutionary Black Workers but extends to cover the black community's struggle against police and bureaucratic oppression through the legal and political systems. Equally, the authors allow theoretical insights to flow naturally from the narrative, rather than imposing them from outside.

By contrast, and despite his obvious commitment, Geschwender's book suffers from the limitations of its academic style. Thus, having stated quite neatly the nature of the race/class dichotomy in American society in the opening pages, Geschwender nevertheless finds it necessary to lay out five theoretical 'models' on this subject. This is followed by an extended account of the role of blacks in Detroit and the car industry, before we get on to the main subject matter of the book. Geschwender's account of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers is itself presented in a somewhat segmented fashion, including, for example, a separate chapter on its ideology. Finally, the book ends with another dose of theory, with Geschwender calling for a synthesis of the 'capitalist exploitation' and 'colonial' models around the concept of 'ethclass'.

My objection to this is not just that Geschwender's attempts at theorizing are relatively simplistic but that the 'theory' is presented in such a lifeless manner, somehow separating the reader from the events. Also, there is a sense in which Geschwender, if not in theory then at least by omission, tends to dismiss related struggles in the community. After all, the election of a marxist judge (as described in *Detroit, I do Mind Dying*) who can then begin a process of transforming the repressive legal apparatus from within, cannot be written off as merely reformist or insignificant to the parallel struggle in the workplace. Indeed, a point which emerges forcefully from Georgakas and Surkin's account is that these various forms of action are inextricably linked and that black people, whether in Detroit or anywhere else, rarely have the luxury of choosing the arena of their struggles.

Having said this, there is much to be gained from reading both

these books. The similarities between Detroit and Dagenham, Cologne or Turin are obvious, and both books raise important questions about the organization of black/immigrant worker resistance against capitalism and entrenched union racism

University of Birmingham

LEE BRIDGES

Pseudoscience and mental ability: the origins and fallacies of the IQ controversy

by JEFFREY M. BLUM (New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1978). 240pp. £8.25

This book started out as a 'graduate tutorial paper' at the University of California and matured — thanks to Watergate, which 'provided inspiration by establishing an atmosphere conducive to the unveiling of scandal'. In spite of this rather corny apology, however, it is a useful addition to the volumes on intelligence testing which have been rapidly accumulating since 1972, when Leon Kamin first exposed the extent of 'data-fiddling' in IQ testing.

Its aim is to help break the pseudo-scientific grip which the IQ enterprise still has on people's minds. It sets out to do this by exposing the 'dubious half-truths', the 'complete falsehoods' and the 'untestable mythologies' which 'masquerade as legitimate scientific findings'. This leads to the (rather mild) conclusion that 'it would be no great loss if both the tests and the concept of IQ were eliminated'.

The author opens by stating six commonly-held positions or hypotheses on IQ, which are intended to draw the issues of the book into focus. These include such hypotheses as 'there are genetically determined differences in mental capacity', 'blacks are intellectually inferior', and so on. It is a good idea to do this; but unfortunately these positions are not put with the clarity that they deserve (they rely largely, for example, on quotations from prominent IQ-testers), and their presentation betrays some of the naivete about certain matters (genes and environment, for example) which persists annoyingly throughout the book.

The next section spells out the ideological connection between the IQ-testing movement and the eugenics movement, according to whose prophets we should be able to produce 'a highly gifted race of men by judicious marriages' just as we are able 'to obtain by careful selection a permanent breed of dogs or horses gifted with peculiar powers of running'. This strand in IQ-testing has been competently traced by several authors in this decade. But the lucidity with which it is described in the present work help to make it a genuine contribution to this particular question.

This said, however, it should also be pointed out that the book's

treatment of the *origins* of social ideas is pretty narrow. From it, the reader could, for example, gain the impression that the ideas behind the IQ-testing movement simply 'sprang' into existence in the minds of Galton and Spencer. Such an impression would be wrong in two ways: first, because many other nineteenth-century characters figured in the genesis of these ideas (John Stuart Mill, for instance, proposed a system of plural-voting geared to mental test scores, just as the 'communist' J.B.S. Haldane did a century later); secondly, because the ideas themselves were a resolution of the need to reconcile democratic ideals with the realities of a class society at home and imperial conquest abroad (and this is evident in many of Galton's and Spencer's writings).

Following a brief history of the invention of intelligence tests themselves, the book then goes on to examine the controversial 'heritability question', or the extent to which IQ test scores are allegedly 'genetically determined'. This is where the book is most mixed up. For example, it treats the persistence of the controversy as merely a *technical* problem only awaiting the collection of data of sufficient quantity and quality. Nowhere is there a sufficiently emphatic statement of what developmental geneticists have now established beyond doubt: that in the course of the development of any organism, genes and environment are not independent 'factors', whose relative contribution can be measured, but totally interacting processes, each of which has no meaningful existence divorced from the other.

The book returns to some sort of strength again in examining the *validity* of IQ-tests (or what it is they are supposed to measure) though here again Blum's lack of broader perspective has prevented a radical critique. It then goes on to describe the most recent phase of IQ controversy, i.e., the rise of 'Jensenism'. After a chapter on 'creativity' tests — thought by some to be an alternative to IQ tests — the book ends with a long (50-page) 'Overview and appraisal', which attempts 'to estimate the influence of this distortion and pretense'. Here a parallel is drawn with Lysenkoism in the USSR to illustrate further the social psychology of pseudo-science. This is done very well, as is the following chapter on 'The ideological dimension'. The final chapter aims to revise the 'Images of mental ability', which alas it does not, managing only to augment the stress on intelligence with others on creativity and motivation.

In sum, this book is a genuine contribution with regard to some aspects of this subject. Moreover, its compactness and readability will make it attractive to students and to the more general reader (though at an appalling price). On the other hand, readers will need to be alerted to the misconceptions and confusions in some areas — for it is just such diffusion of muddled ideas in pseudo science that the book is intended to combat.

Revolutionary pressures in Africa

By CLAUDE AKE (London, Zed Press, 1978). 107pp. £2.50 paper.

Ake's book is bound to become a talking point — its language is forceful, if at times over rhetorical, and it raises a number of vital issues — despite its conceptual confusions. Zed Press are, correctly, aiming to get the book discussed and debated in Third World countries.

The most effective parts of the work are those in which Ake characterizes the African ruling class. He explores its material basis, its ideological development and its weakness with relation to the capitalist forces from the advanced countries. There are some useful comparative pages on the indigenization measures taken by several African countries which serve the needs both of local and of metropolitan capital, and some good discussions of the nature of African 'state capitalism'. One-party statesmen and generals are placed together as part of a larger movement towards a 'depoliticization' of African society that stifles the possibilities of structural change. In general Ake explains convincingly how the measures taken by African regimes to stabilise conditions and resolve their problems, both with regard to their own populations and to foreign capital, tend to get them into ever hotter water.

The author's treatment of the world capitalist system is far less satisfactory. It makes little sense to see the capitalist world divided into 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian' countries, except as a glorified metaphor for writing 'rich' and 'poor'. From Ake's own discussion of the issues, how can he conceive of the governments of capitalist Kenya or Nigeria as proletarians in a 'global class struggle'? Rhetoric has taken over from analysis — leading inevitably to mistakes. It is certainly not true that the attitude of the Soviet Union towards the development of productive forces in Communist states (such as Bulgaria, Mongolia or Cuba) has been the same as that of France towards Senegal. Tin production control originated in the policies of colonial regimes and British companies, hardly in the strivings of 'proletarian' nations. Nor is it clear what OPEC, in theory or in practice, has to do with the politics of any extant proletariat. At bottom, Ake's view of international relations is a retreat from Marx's (or even Adam Smith's) understanding of capitalism to one based on Hobbes: the war of all against all with unceasing mercantilist battle being waged by desperate forces struggling for scant resources.

In the second half of the book, Ake moves towards a consideration of revolutionary and countervailing pressures in Africa. On the positive side, he notes the impact of a residual radicalism carrying over from the nationalist struggles and the tendency of African leaders to talk the language of what he terms 'defensive radicalism' as their position becomes more difficult. The predatory character and

external orientation of capitalism in Africa effectively block the development of productive forces. Ake actually sees this combination of growing repression and radical rhetoric as a means of educating Africans to the real class nature of their governments. In short, the revolutionary pressures of the title mean largely that, as conditions of life deteriorate, a revolutionary consciousness may emerge — not much fuel offered to fire revolutionary hearts. For the foreseeable future, Ake places little faith in the African masses, whether urban workers or peasants. He sees the possibility of change primarily in the form of intervention by some fraction of the bourgeoisie while admitting the limitations on a revolution so constituted.

In the final analysis the book — often insightful and always thought provoking — is disappointing. It lacks a concrete analysis of class relationships and alliances and real understanding of the articulation of different coexisting modes of production — leaving only some arbitrary speculation about petty bourgeoisies that may or may not commit class suicide. I for one hope that Ake will return to a consideration of the themes he has raised here — but with greater depth and cohesion.

University of Warwick

BILL FREUND

Race relations in the urban South, 1865-1890

By HOWARD RABINOWITZ (New York, Oxford University Press, 1978). 441pp.

This latest title in the 'Urban life in America' series is a significant book. But its importance lies not in urban history but in its contribution to the continuing debate over the origins of segregation. This debate began with the publication, in the mid-1950s, of Vann Woodward's *The strange career of Jim Crow* which, throughout the subsequent controversy, remained at the centre of the argument. Woodward postulated that segregation, as a legal system of race relations, was not developed in the south until as late as the 1890s and the early twentieth century. Before the populist revolt emerged in the mid-1890s to threaten the section's political and social status quo, southern race relations had been relatively fluid and approaches other than segregation had been employed. In other words, so Professor Woodward argues, a generation or so had elapsed after emancipation before segregation was adopted, and even then it was only under duress and in a time of social crisis.

Since the 1950s, historians have examined the Woodward thesis and have found evidence of segregationist practice before the 1890s. They have discovered it in the antebellum period and even in reconstruction during the early 1870s, but its extent and pervasiveness

had not hitherto been examined as thoroughly as in Rabinowitz's study, which spans the entire period from emancipation to the last decade of the century.

Selecting five state capitals (Nashville, Richmond, Raleigh, Atlanta and Montgomery) as a representative sample of southern cities, he has found that racial separation was not sporadic or marginal during this era, but was the norm everywhere. Furthermore, this separation did not by any means provide equality of treatment or condition. The whole structure of urban life — employment, housing, courts — was segregated. So too were the education and welfare services provided by municipal and state government. And finally, the cities' politics and public places were effectively segregated.

The segregationist trend and purpose of urban race relations after the civil war were relentless and irresistible. Actually this pattern would have been quite apparent even without the massive compilation of detailed evidence which Rabinowitz offers. Nonetheless, his discoveries amount to a serious challenge to the Woodward thesis.

But Rabinowitz also argues that, while segregation was ubiquitous and unrelieved, it did not amount to a setback for blacks, since before the war, as slaves or free Negroes, they had been entirely excluded from access to virtually all public institutions and places. Consequently, segregated facilities, if that was all that would be available after emancipation, were better than none at all. And, he asserts, that was how in effect blacks themselves saw it. Accordingly, they were relatively sanguine when integration turned out not to be the sequel to emancipation.

This evaluation gives segregation a rather different meaning from what has been traditionally assumed. It involves two major assumptions which are both questionable. The first is that, in terms of treatment, access to services and institutions previously denied may well have been an improvement, even though such access was unequal and segregated — and contrary to policies of equal rights and treatment espoused at the time by the Federal government. Something better than segregation had been offered and was within reach. A second problem is the assertion that blacks saw segregation as a gain. While blacks, particularly the bourgeois leadership, did accommodate to segregation, all the while hoping that equal treatment could be salvaged from it, this did not mean that all blacks, or even the leaders, saw segregation the way that Rabinowitz assumes they did.

The book ends with the year 1890 and therefore the following decade when segregation was codified and legalized is beyond its scope. Yet the Woodward thesis about the origins of segregation places considerable stress on the social and political turmoil of that decade as the precipitant of the *de jure* segregation which persisted until 1964. Since he has refuted Woodward's contention that there

was little segregation de facto before the 1890s, Rabinowitz cannot refrain from offering a reason for the emergence of de jure segregation. He suggests that it was required to control the new generation of blacks, the children of those who accepted segregation as preferable to exclusion, who now felt betrayed by their parents' accommodation, and protested against it.

This explanation is ingenious, but it is quite inadequate. Even if young blacks did resist widely, their doing so did not in actuality force whites to legislate segregation. On this aspect of the problem Woodward is nearer the mark. He asserts that the legalization of segregation had to do with whites, not blacks. Legal segregation arose, he feels, out of the populist revolt in which blacks and lower-class whites had threatened the southern social and political establishment. On this he is correct. But legal segregation was not introduced in response to the demands of the defeated and frustrated whites, as Woodward believes. Rather, a rigid, legalized segregation was the device the ruling class used to keep the blacks and their former allies apart as permanently as possible. Segregation was imposed from above, not demanded from below.

Howard Rabinowitz has demonstrated irrefutably the existence of widespread segregation in the south before the 1890s. But he is on weaker ground when he considers the attitudes of blacks towards this development and when he tries to explain why a thoroughly segregated society still needed to formalize and legalize its separation of the races.

University of Illinois at Chicago Circle

MICHAEL PERMAN

Women and the welfare state

By ELIZABETH WILSON (London, Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1977). 208pp. £5.50 hardback; £2.20 paper

The significance of this book is two-fold. The first is that it is grounded in the author's political practice in the Women's Liberation Movement and attempts a socialist feminist analysis of the welfare policies of the state. The second is the historical account of the way in which 'the welfare state has always been closely connected with the development of the family and has acted to reinforce and support it in significant ways'.

With the rationalization of the Poor Law in 1834 and the development of education and sanitation in the second half of the nineteenth century, the state attempted to rescue the working class from its own 'barbarism' and impose a bourgeois order of values, values that would attack the inconvenient traits deplored by the Victoria bourgeoisie — drunkenness, increasing crime rates, lack of religion, squalor and the

lack of 'habits of industry'. The role of the family was seen as crucial in this control of undesirable forms of behaviour, and women in particular were seen not only as the providers of a clean and decent home for their husbands and children, but also as the guardians of the community's morality. The attempts to regulate working-class behaviour at first took the form of trying to promote 'correct moral attitudes'. Deliberate state support for the family came later with the evolution of national insurance. Today the regulation of the family takes both an ideological form — in the way, for instance, that social workers define 'normal' behaviour for a wife and mother — and a financial form — in the way that the tax laws and the social security system operate. Elizabeth Wilson also points out how the education system encourages children to aspire to a particular form of family life when they grow up as one of the ways in which education operates as a form of social control in capitalist society.

Many working-class women have always combined domestic work and child-rearing with waged work outside the home has increased. Social workers began to retreat from the extreme position of John Bowlby in his condemnation of 'working mothers'. The preservation of family life, however, remained the goal for social work, as is illustrated by the approach of a massive research project set up in the late 1960s by the Leverhulme Trust and Political and Economic Planning. Work outside the home was seen as merely added on to the woman's traditional duties as wife and mother, and the family as a mechanism of social control was to be left unchanged — a hope that was belied by the development of the Women's Liberation Movement. Women are now challenging the values and operation of both the education system and the social security apparatus. Coming out of this struggle, this book demonstrates that not only a socialist but also a feminist analysis of the welfare state is necessary.

London School of Economics

JENNY MORRIS

Africa in modern history: the search for a new society

By BASIL DAVIDSON, (London, Allen Lane/Penguin Books 1978). 431pp. £7.95

A hundred years ago African people were organized in large numbers of communities. Yet today Africa is made up of some fifty nation states. How did this come about and why? To tell this story within the confines of a single volume is not easy. It has been attempted by many, but the result is often a stringing together of salient facts and events out of which all life and movement has been torn. But to tell it by showing 'where the bed of the river decides the flow of history, and where the flow itself, wearing and eroding by its sheer increasing

power, shifts the bed into a new direction' is to recreate history as a living science: it is this quality which makes Davidson's book exceptional.

The book begins with a brief account of Africa before the arrival of the Europeans, demonstrating the variety of social organizations among the African people, explaining the nature of the 'lineage mode of production' and the emergence of merchant capitalists through long-distance trade. Davidson discusses why such merchant capitalists were unable to transform themselves into a fully-fledged bourgeoisie as did their counterparts in Europe in the same period. The development of early capitalism in Europe and America and the subjection of the continent to the horrors of the slave trade played not an insignificant part in this process, and represented the first relationship of Europe with Africa.

As capitalism evolved in Europe, the relationship with Africa changed: the latter was slowly transformed from a provider of slaves to a provider of raw materials. During this period — the eighteenth century — Europe was little interested in colonization. But with the development of monopoly capitalism the invasion of Africa began in earnest.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Portugal and Spain all carved out parts of their 'dark continent' for themselves. Their aims were the same — extraction and exploitation — but their arrangements on the ground, so to speak, differed from power to power. And it is in presenting the warp and woof of their joint and separate histories 'within the packed arena of ongoing African society' that Davidson achieves and conveys a feel for Africa itself.

The great slump of the 1930s resulted in major changes in some colonies, and laid the basis for the establishment from the 1950s onwards of, yet again, a new relationship between Africa and Europe, a relationship 'which emerged with the overseas development of transnational capitalism in the West and of non-capitalist or socialist economies in the East'.

Just as imperialism evolved new techniques to maintain itself, so did the resistance to it necessitate a continual, innovative, often painful, search for the most effective means to combat it. Those who received a 'western-style' education began to experiment with the new values obtained, and through a process of fusing both the old and the new, African nationalism began to emerge. In different parts of Africa the form and content of African nationalism were sometimes radically different, but each, in addressing itself to the problems of the colonial present, had to take account of the pre-colonial past. To succeed they had to learn that 'no one need be asked to abandon the shrines of the ancestors; but the ancestors must learn to speak the language of modern reality, or else accept retirement into cultural decay'.

But how to overcome the problem which they all faced: to build nationalism without the existence of a 'nation' as such? The successes and the failures are examined in a sympathetic light by Davidson, always careful to portray the problems in the way that the nationalists themselves saw them. 'Nationhood', says Davidson, 'won the day. But it had come as a bastard birth, or rather, out of parents so ill matched as to make the raising of the infant worse than chancy.' Movements such as FRELIMO and PAIGC, which had attempted to build from the base upwards, undoubtedly had greater chances of success. But those movements which failed to fuse the national question with the social question were destined to import the capitalist model into Africa. New experiments are still being carried out in some African countries, but not without problems. Davidson is optimistic.

Most histories present the African peoples as passive recipients of whatever the Europeans decided to do to them; African history becomes an appendage of European history lacking autonomous development. It is a historiography that requires the subject peoples to be presented as the subjects of history — and thereby perpetuates their subjugation.

But not so Davidson. He sees Africans themselves as doing, not always being done to. And in the process he not only restores history to Africa but locates Africa in history.

London

FIROZ HAJI

The cultural crisis of modern medicine

Edited by JOHN EHRENREICH (New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1978). 300pp. \$15.00 £8.85.

Radical critiques of medical care have hitherto centred largely on issues such as the inadequate financing, distribution and quality of health services, and on their profitability for private interests. The essays in this collection, however, are primarily concerned with the ideological nature of both medical knowledge and its social relations. It is unfortunate that the editor has chosen to organize these around a concept as problematic as 'cultural crisis', and yet the existing vocabulary of political economy provides no obvious alternative. This does not mean that economic analysis has been abandoned, rather that Ehrenreich and his contributors have attempted to broaden the area of struggle around medical care. Moreover, as the introduction makes clear, it was in the context of various political struggles that many of the issues discussed in this book were first raised.

The opening section contains some general reflections on western scientific medicine both as a commodity form and as a mechanism of social control. The latter theme is then very effectively developed in the second group of essays, through an examination of the (historical and continuing) role of the medical profession in defining the status and social capacities of women. Subjects covered include the Victorian cult of female invalidism, the medical appropriation of control over fertility and childbirth and the pervasive sexism of medical literature. All demonstrate with striking clarity the way in which medical precepts often correspond more closely to prevailing social ideology than to any scientific evidence.

The last section of the book deals with the relationship between medicine and imperialism. It opens with Fanon's classic description of the oppressive social relations inherent in colonial medicine ('that lingering doubt as to the colonial doctor's essential humanity ... the technician's words are always understood in a pejorative way. The truth objectively expressed is constantly vitiated by the lie of the colonial situation'). Fanon's observations regarding Algeria are fully borne out in the remaining essays, all of which examine the calculated use of medicine as the thin 'humanitarian' edge of the imperialist wedge. For instance, the early activities of the Rockefeller Foundation in the international health field and the role of the US military medicinemen in Vietnam are both recorded. The weakness of this part of the book, however, lies precisely in its historical specificity. The cases cited focus on imperialism at its most belligerent and, with the exception of James Paul's article on Morocco, they shed little light on more insidious contemporary developments. Paul's interesting contribution is also notable for discussing imperialist medicine in the context of the simultaneous deterioration of health produced by the same economic system.

In what is perhaps the most important essay in the book, Marc Renaud, too, is concerned to define the relationship between scientific medicine and the social production of illness. Medicine's role in the improvement of health has always been insignificant compared with that of higher living standards and social reform. At the same time, capitalist growth has itself engendered new forms of ill health in developed and underdeveloped countries alike. Many of the shortcomings of modern medicine arise from its failure to incorporate such socio-economic factors into its individualistic, laboratory-centred approach. But this approach nevertheless has important social consequences, as Renaud observes.

It transforms the potentially explosive social problems that are diseases and death into discrete and isolable commodities that can be incorporated into the capitalist organisation of the economy in the same way as any other commodity on the economic market.

Hence the content of modern medicine is as much a reflection of capitalist priorities and assumptions as its inequitable distribution. In helping to demystify western medicine, this book indicates the extent to which its scientific authority has been used to legitimate and reinforce the existing social order. As Ehrenreich says, 'the question then, is not one of throwing out scientific medicine; it is a question of whether medicine can *become* a science'.

Polytechnic of North London

IMOGEN PENNELL

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