

**RACE &
CLASS**

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EDWARD SAID ON ENGLISH

A. SIVANANDAN ON NAIPAUL

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EDWARD W. SAID

Figures, configurations, transfigurations*

It is possible to discern a salutary and invigorating quality in the very notion of Commonwealth literature today (now that Britannia no longer rules the waves) that is most pleasant to note. Yet this isn't either to mock or to patronise the utopian lilt in the idea sustaining the theme of these meetings as it is given in their overall title: 'Transformations, cross-cultural communities and new forms of Commonwealth literature'. For, in fact, the most powerful aspect of all these new communities and forms that we both celebrate and study is that they are for the most part post-colonial and, in a few instances, actively anti-imperial. None of us would disagree, I think, if in the first instance we were to interpret the great mass of recent non-European literature as expressing ideas, values, emotions formerly suppressed, ignored or denigrated by, and of course in, the well-known metropolitan centres. For in the decades-long struggle to achieve decolonisation and independence from European control, literature has played a crucial role in the re-establishment of a national cultural heritage, in the reinstatement of native idioms, in the re-imagining and re-figuring of local histories, geographies, communities. As such, then, literature

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not only mobilised active resistance to incursions from the outside, but also contributed massively as the shaper, creator, agent of illumination within the realm of the colonised.

What gives the actuality of Commonwealth literature its special force is that, of all languages today, English is, properly speaking, *the* world language. I say this as someone who grew up outside the Commonwealth orbit and, still outside the Commonwealth, who now lives at the centre of what has become the new English-speaking empire. This gives a particular and perhaps even eccentric perspective on what to an outsider like myself appears as the privileged historical centrality of English within the Commonwealth grouping. I do not for a moment wish to minimise the hardships, violence or horrors endured by enormous numbers of people on whom the rule of English was impressed with sometimes catastrophic force, even as English also brought the many advantages of a prosperous culture. But I do think that it might serve a purpose here to begin by talking about the relationship between the dominance of English, on the one hand, and, on the other, resistances to it that come from cultural spheres and practices where English is either adjacent to the main English speaking dominions, or is still confined to specialised status. This will enable us the better to understand the place of English in the global environment.

Let me impose a little more autobiography on you. I grew up in what, in effect, were two British colonies, Palestine and Egypt, but which remained principally non-British culturally as well as politically. In addition to interests requiring a commanding British presence there, Egypt and Palestine were of importance to the French, were technically within the Ottoman Empire until the end of the First World War, and, of course, went their own ways after the Second World War. One can get some sense of the dynamics of that now almost forgotten pre-war world from Olivia Manning's *Levant Trilogy*, a somewhat more lurid version of which (mainly concentrated in Alexandria, for whom better guides are E.M. Forster, Cavafy and Ungaretti) turns up in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. Very recently, a young English writer, Anthony Sattin, in his book *Lifting the Veil*, produced an elegant history of British society in Egypt from the middle of the eighteenth century through to the middle of the twentieth.

From such works one concludes that the kind of culture embodied in the notion of a British Commonwealth surrounded, but remained confined to minority status within, the Arab world. One result of this is that, unlike the Caribbean, India, or Anglophone Africa, the Arab world that fell under British control for at least a century and a half never produced any literature to speak of in English. This is strikingly different from the experience of the French Muslim-Arabic imperial

realm, where a thriving Francophone literature continues until this day, with eminent writers and critics in it like Ben Jalloun, Kateb Yacine, Mohammed Dib, el Khatibi who are true cultural amphibians at home both in metropolitan France and in their own societies. In the world in which I was a boy, English was either the language of the ruler, of tiny administrative elites, or of even smaller Christian minorities. Thanks to the researches of a number of historians, we have come to understand the dynamics of national and Islamic resistance by which British institutions (which were unlike their French counterparts and not designed for the assimilation of natives) made their selective incursions on native society, and yet were kept at bay while schools of native reformers harnessed tribes, guilds, fraternities and schools to the mobilising cause of what would later become full-fledged independence.

Jump now to the middle 1980s. Asked a few years ago by a national university in one of the Gulf States to visit there for a week, I found that my mission was to evaluate the English programme at the university and perhaps offer some recommendations for its improvement. I was flabbergasted to discover that in sheer numerical terms English attracted the largest number of young people of any department in the university. I was disheartened to find, however, that the curriculum was divided about equally between what was called linguistics (that is, grammar and phonetic structure) and literature. The literary courses were, I thought, rigorously orthodox, a pattern followed pretty much, I think, even in older and more distinguished Arab universities like those of Cairo and Ain Shams. Young Arabs read up dutifully on Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Austen and Dickens as they might have studied Sanskrit or medieval heraldry; no emphasis at all was placed on the relationship between English and the colonial processes that brought the language and its literature to the Arab world. I could not detect much interest, except in private discussions with a few faculty members, in the new literatures of the Caribbean, Africa or Asia. The result seemed to me an anachronistic and odd confluence of rote learning, uncritical teaching and (to put it kindly) very haphazard results.

On the other hand, I found out two additional things of some concern to me as a secular intellectual and critic. The reason for the large numbers of students taking English was given to me quite frankly by a somewhat disaffected instructor: they take English in droves, he said, because many of them proposed to end up working for the airlines, or for banks, in which English was the worldwide lingua franca. This all but terminally consigned English to the level of a technical language almost totally stripped not only of expressive and aesthetic characteristics but also denuded of any critical or self-conscious dimension. You learned English to use computers, respond

to orders, transmit telexes, decipher manifests and so forth. That was all. The other (to me alarming) thing I discovered is that English, such as it was, existed in what seemed to be a seething cauldron of Islamic revivalism. While I was there, for instance, elections to the university senate were being contested; everywhere I turned, Islamic slogans were plastered all over the wall and, I later found out, the various Islamic candidates won a handsome, if not ultimately decisive, plurality. In Egypt, where I observed much the same thing earlier this year, it is amusing to mention that at a lecture to the English Faculty at Cairo University, after having spoken for an hour about nationalism, independence and liberation as alternative cultural practices to imperialism, I was asked about 'the theocratic alternative'. (I had mistakenly supposed I was being asked about 'the Socratic alternative', and was put right very quickly.) The question came to me from a well-spoken young woman whose head was covered by a veil and who obviously was asking the question because religion constituted the main alternative concern to her as a citizen in a largely secular society. I had simply overlooked *that* in my heedless anti-clerical and secular zeal. I nevertheless proceeded boldly to my attack!

Thus, the very same English whose users in the Commonwealth can aspire to literary accomplishments of a very high order and for whom, in the notion of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a critical use of the language might permit a decolonising of the mind, coexists with very different new communities in a less appealing new configuration. On the one hand, in places where English was once present as the language of ruler and administrator, its residue today is a much diminished presence. Either it is a technical language with wholly instrumental characteristics and features; or it is a foreign language with various implicit connections to the larger English-speaking world, but where its presence abuts on the much more impressive, much more formidable emergent reality of organised religious fervour. And since the language of Islam is Arabic, a language with considerable literary community and hieratic force, English seems to me to have sunk quite low, and to a quite uninteresting and attenuated level.

To gauge this new subordination in an era where in other contexts English has acquired remarkable prominence and many interesting new communities of literary, critical and philosophical practice, we need only briefly recall the quite stunning acquiescence of the Islamic world to the over-all prohibitions and proscriptions as well as threats pronounced against Salman Rushdie because of *The Satanic Verses*. That the novel dealt with Islam in English and for what was believed to be a largely western audience was its main offence. I certainly do not mean that the entire Islamic world acquiesced, but that its official agencies, spokespeople, secular as well as religious, took what appeared to be a united stand, either blindly rejecting or vehemently

refusing to engage with a book which the enormous majority had never read. (The Khomeini threat, of course, went a good deal further than mere rejection, but the Iranian position was a very isolated one.) On the other hand, it is equally important to note two things about the English-speaking world's reaction to *The Satanic Verses*. One was the relative (although with the usual caution and squeamishness) unanimity of condemnations of Islam marshalled in a cause that appeared to most of the writers and intellectuals at the time both safe and fashionable. As for the many writers either murdered, imprisoned, or banned in places where either American allies like Israel or irremediably anti-American 'terrorists' like Libya, Iran, and Syria *could* have been condemned for such reprehensible practices, nothing was said. And, second of all, there seemed to be little further interest either in the Islamic world as a whole or in the conditions of authorship there once the ritual phrases in support of Rushdie and denunciatory of Islam were pronounced. Whereas, in fact, I had hoped that some greater enthusiasm and energy be expended in dialogue with those considerable literary and intellectual figures from the Islamic world (Mahfouz, Darwish, among others) who occasionally defended (and occasionally attacked) Rushdie in much more trying circumstances than those obtaining where writers protested Rushdie's fate in Greenwich Village or Hampstead.

None of this, however, takes very much away from my main point here, which is that there are highly significant deformations within the new communities that now exist alongside and partially inside the recently coherent outlines of the world-English group, a group that includes the heterogenous voices, various languages, hybrid forms that give the Commonwealth its distinctive and still problematic identity. Thus the emergence since the late 1970s of a startlingly sharp construction called 'Islam' is, I think, one such deformation; others are 'communism', 'Japan' and the 'West' (there are still others), each of them possessing styles of polemic, a whole battery of discourses and an unsettling profusion of opportunities for dissemination. Only if we try to map and register the vast domains commanded by these gigantic caricatural essentialisations can we more fully appreciate and interpret the relatively modest gains made by smaller literate groups that are bound together not by insensate polemic but by affinities, sympathies and compassion.

Few people during the exhilarating heyday of decolonisation and early Third World nationalism were watching or paying close attention to what would later happen to the presence of a carefully nurtured nativism in the anti-colonial ranks, how it would grow and grow to inordinately large proportions. I will concede that it is quite easy now to play the role of a retrospective Cassandra, but one still ought to be a little surprised that all those nationalist appeals to pure or authentic

Islam, or to Africanism, negritude, or Arabism, were joined by so many without sufficient consciousness that precisely those ethnicities and spiritual essences would come back to exact a very high price from their successful adherents. To his credit, Fanon was one of the few to remark on the dangers posed by an untutored national consciousness to a great socio-political movement like decolonisation. Much the same could be said about the dangers of an untutored religious consciousness. And so the appearance of various mullahs, colonels and one-party regimes, who pleaded national security risks and the need to protect the foundling revolutionary state as their platform, foisted a new set of problems on to the already considerably onerous heritage of imperialism.

In intellectual and historical terms, I do not think it is possible to name many states or regimes that are exempt from active participation in the new post-colonial international configuration. National security and identity are the watchwords. Along with the authorised figures of the ruler, the pantheon of national heroes and martyrs, the established religious authorities, the newly triumphant politicians seemed to require borders and passports first of all. What had once been the imaginative liberation of a people – Aimé Césaire’s ‘inventions of new souls’ – and the audacious metaphoric charting of spiritual territory usurped by colonial masters, were quickly translated into and accommodated by the world system of barriers, maps, frontiers, police forces, customs and exchange controls. The finest, most elegiac commentary on a dismal state of affairs was provided by Basil Davidson in the course of a memorial reflection on the legacy of Amílcar Cabral (published in the Winter 1986 issue of *Race & Class*). Rehearsing the questions that were never asked about what would happen after liberation, Davidson concludes that a deepening crisis brought on neo-imperialism and put petty-bourgeois rulers firmly in command. But, Davidson continues, this brand of ‘reformist nationalism continues to dig its own grave. As the grave deepens fewer and fewer persons in command are able to get their own heads above the edge of it. To the tune of requiems sung in solemn chorus by hosts of foreign experts or would be *fundi* of one profession or another, often on very comfortable (and comforting) salaries, the funeral proceeds. The frontiers are there, the frontiers are sacred. What else, after all, could guarantee privilege and power to ruling elites?’ Chinua Achebe’s most recent novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, is a compelling survey of this enervating and dispiriting landscape.

Davidson goes on to rectify the gloom of his own description by pointing to what he calls the people’s ‘own solution to this carapace accepted from the colonial period’.

What the peoples think upon this subject is shown by their incessant emigration across these lines on the map, as well as by their smuggling enterprises. So that even while a 'bourgeois Africa' hardens its frontiers, multiplies its border controls, and thunders against the smuggling of persons and goods, a 'peoples' Africa' works in quite another way.

The cultural correlative of that audacious but often extremely costly combination of smuggling and emigration is, of course, familiar to us as exemplified by that new group of writers referred to as cosmopolitan recently in a perceptive analysis by Tim Brennan (*Race & Class*, Summer 1989). And the subject of crossing borders as well as the representative deprivations and exhilarations of migration have become a major theme in the art of the post-colonial era.

Although it is possible to characterise these writers and themes as comprising a new cultural configuration and to point with considerable admiration to regional achievements not only in Europe but also in the Caribbean, in Africa, North and South America and the subcontinent, I believe the configuration ought to be looked at from a somewhat less attractive but, in my opinion, more realistic and political point of view. While we should quite correctly admire both the material as well as the achievements of, say, Rushdie's work, as part of a significant formation within the general field of Commonwealth literature, we should be just as willing at the same time to note with what it is encumbered or, to put it more precisely, how the particularly aesthetically valuable work of our time is strikingly also a part of threatening, or coercive, or deeply anti-literary, anti-intellectual formations. 'There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.' Those other darker connections, those sinister relationships and partnerships alluded to by Benjamin are where, in political and cultural terms, today's interesting conjunctures are to be found. They beseech our individual and collective critical work no less than the hermeneutic and utopian work we feel better about doing when we read, discuss and reflect on valuable literary texts.

Let me be more concrete. It is not only tired, harassed and dispossessed refugees who cross borders and attempt acculturation in new environments; it is also the whole gigantic system of the mass media that is ubiquitous, slipping by most barriers and settling in nearly everywhere. Anyone who has read the work of Herbert Schiller and Armand Mattelart is aware of the practically total encroachment of a handful of multinationals on the production as well as the distribution of journalistic representations; Schiller's most recent study attempts to describe how it is that all departments of culture, not just those having to do with news, have been invaded by or

enclosed within the ever-expanding circle of this relatively small number of privately held corporations.

There are too many consequences of this for me to list and discuss here, so I shall limit myself to two or three things. First is that the international media system has in actuality done what idealistic or ideologically inspired notions of collectivity or totality aspire to. I mean by this that when, for instance, we speak about and research a theoretical entity called Commonwealth or world literature in English, our efforts remain pretty much at the level of (in Lukacsian terms) a putative wholeness; for example, discussions of magic realism in the Caribbean and African novel allude to and in the most successful cases sketch the possible contours of a post-modern field that binds these works together. Yet we know at the same time that the works and their authors and readers remain concretely specific to and articulated in their own local circumstances, circumstances that are usefully kept separate when we analyse the contrasting conditions of reception in the metropolitan centre (London or New York) on the one hand, the peripheries on the other. Yet, compared to the way in which the four major western news agencies operate, or the mode by which television journalists from CNN or NBC select, gather and re-broadcast pictorial images from India or Ethiopia, or the way programmes like *Dallas* and *Dynasty* work their way through even the Lebanese civil war, we not only have in the media system a fully integrated practical network, but there also exists within it a very efficient mode of articulation knitting the world together.

I know of no detailed theoretical balance sheet that lays out what the power of this increasingly universal system of articulation truly is. I do know, however, that a monument to an attempt by the less developed world to regulate and in other ways to influence it can be found in the McBride Report on the New World Information Order (NWIO). But that was in the days before UNESCO was first attacked and then re-structured to suit the interests of the major western powers. Thus, the NWIO has ended and market forces rule unchecked. Reinforcing this system is the map of patronage and monetary power elucidated in the North-South Report (the so-called Brandt Commission), in which the old imperial demarcations have reappeared both in the form of the predictable economic discrepancies as well as in the lamentably skewed inter-relationships between the debtor nations of the peripheries and the creditor nations of the metropolis.

Lastly, the world system map, articulating and producing culture, economics and political power along with their military and demographic coefficients, has also developed an institutionalised tendency to produce out-of-scale transnational images that are now in the process of re-orienting international social discourses and processes. Take as a

case in point the emergence of terrorism and fundamentalism during the 1980s. For one, you can hardly begin (in the public space provided by international discourse) to analyse political conflicts involving Kurds and Iraqis, or Tamils and Sinhalese, or Sikhs and Hindus – the list is infinitely extendable – without having resort to categories and images of terrorism and fundamentalism. For another, these images derive entirely from the concerns and from the intellectual factories in metropolitan centres like Washington and London. Moreover, they are fearful images that seem to lack discriminate contents or definitions, and they signify moral power and approval for whoever uses them, moral defensiveness and criminalisation for whoever they designate.

During the past decade these two gigantic reductions have mobilised armies as well as dispersed communities. Neither the official Iranian reaction to Rushdie's novel, nor the unofficial or semi-official enthusiasm of expatriate Islamic communities in the West, nor the public and private expressions of western outrage are intelligible, in my opinion, without reference to the minute logic of articulations, reactions and large-scale movements enabled by the overbearing system I am trying to identify. For, in the relatively open environment postulated by communities of readers interested in emergent post-colonial Commonwealth or Francophone literature, the underlying configurations on the ground are directed and controlled not by processes of hermeneutic investigation, nor by sympathetic and literate intuition, nor by informed reading, but by much coarser and instrumental processes whose goal is the mobilisation of consent, the eradication of dissent, the promotion of an almost literally blind patriotism. By such means is the governability assured of large numbers of people whose potentially disruptive ambitions for democracy and expression are held down (or narcotised) in mass societies.

The fear and terror induced by the overscale images of terrorism and fundamentalism – call them the figures of an international or transnational imaginary made up of foreign devils – contribute to hastening the individual's subordination to the dominant norms of the moment. This is as true in the new post-colonial societies as it is in the West. Thus, to oppose the abnormality and extremism embedded in terrorism and fundamentalism – I provide what is only a small degree of parody with my example – is also to uphold the moderation, rationality, executive centrality of a vaguely designated 'western' (or otherwise local and patriotically assumed) ethos. The irony is that far from simply endowing the western ethos with the confidence and secure 'normality' we tend to associate with privilege and rectitude, this dynamic imbues 'us' with a righteous anger and defensiveness in which all 'others' are seen as enemies, bent on destroying our

civilisation and way of life. A perhaps exaggerated instance of what I mean is to be found in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial on 28 May 1988 by the eminent Orientalist Bernard Lewis. Addressing the simmering controversy at Stanford University and elsewhere concerning changes in the reading list of courses on western civilisation, Lewis notes that to tamper with these venerable canons of great books is, in fact, to threaten 'the West' with a good deal more than a modified reading list containing black or female writers. It is, he says portentously, no less than to threaten us with the return of the harem and polygamy, with child marriages, with slavery and the end of political freedom, self-consciousness, and the disinterested pursuit of truth. Only the West, according to Lewis, abolished slavery on its own – one would have thought that slave revolts added some measure of persuasion – abolished polygamy on its own, studied itself and other societies for no other reason than the purest scientific curiosity untainted by profit or the exercise of power.

What I have rapidly sketched here furnishes, I think accurately, a sense of how these patterns of coercive orthodoxy and self-aggrandisement further strengthen the hold of unthinking assent and unchallengeable doctrine. Their slow perfection over time and after much repetition is answered, alas, with corresponding finality by the designated enemies. Thus, Muslims or Africans or Indians or Japanese, in their idioms and within their own, constantly threatened local enclosures, attack the West, or Americanisation, or imperialism with little more attention to detail or to critical differentiation, discrimination and distinction than is lavished on them by the West. This cannot, unfortunately, stop or inhibit an ultimately senseless dynamic. For to the extent that what we might call the border wars have aims, those aims are wholly impoverishing. One must either join the primordial or constituted group; or one must, as a subaltern 'other', accept inferior status; or one must fight to the death.

To characterise what I have been calling border wars as a regime of essentialisations – Africanising the African, Orientalising the Oriental, Westernising the Western, for an indefinite time and with no alternative because African, Oriental, Western essences can only remain essences – immediately raises the question of what resists this pattern, and the systems that serve it. One obvious instance is identified by Immanuel Wallerstein as what he calls anti-systemic movements whose emergence is a consequence of historical capitalism. There have been enough cases of these latecoming movements in recent times to hearten even the most intransigent pessimism: the democracy movements on all sides of the socialist divide, the Palestinian *intifada*, various social, ecological and cultural movements throughout North and South America. Yet few of these movements seem (to me at least) to be interested in, or have the capacity and

freedom to generalise beyond their own regionally local circumstances. If you are part of a Philippine, or Palestinian, or Brazilian oppositional movement, you are necessarily circumscribed by the tactical and logistical requirements of the daily struggle. But, on the other hand, I do think that there is developing here, if not a general theory, then a common discursive readiness or, to put it in territorial terms, an underlying world map for efforts of this kind. Perhaps we can start to speak of a common counter-articulation, a phrase which best catches this somewhat elusive oppositional mood and its emerging strategies.

But what new or newer kind of intellectual and cultural politics does this call for, what important transformations and transfigurations are there in our ideas of such traditionally and eurocentrically defined identities as the writer, the intellectual, the critic and so forth? Because English is a world language and because the logics of borders and of warring essences are so totalising, we should begin with acknowledgments of a world map without divinely or dogmatically sanctioned spaces, essences, or privileges. It is necessary, therefore, to speak of our element as secular space and humanly constructed and interdependent histories that are fundamentally knowable, but not through grand theory or systematic totalisation. These formulations sound much more impressive and ponderous than they really are. I am trying to say that human experience is finely textured, dense, as well as accessible enough *not* to need the assistance of extra-historical or extra-worldly agencies to illuminate or explain it. What I am talking about is thus a way of regarding the whole world we live in as amenable to our investigation and interrogation quite without appeals to magic keys, or to special jargons and instruments, or curtailed-off practices. As one example of how we would proceed having acknowledged these things, there is the pattern implicit in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, which suggests that it is a coherent intellectual undertaking to consider that all parts of human history are available to understanding and elucidation because they are humanly constructed and designed to accomplish real tasks in the real world. History and geography are susceptible of inventories, in other words.

What this and, to mention other examples, Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*, or *Subaltern Studies*, or Coll's and Dodd's anthology *Englishness*, or Paulin Hountoudji's *Sur la 'Philosophie Africaine'* all suggest is a different paradigm for humanistic research than those that have reigned for about a century now. The scholar in these innovative works is frankly engaged in the politics and interests of the present, engaged with open eyes, rigorous analytic energies and with the decently social values of someone whose main concern is not the survival of a disciplinary fiefdom or guild but the improvement and

non-coercive enhancement of life in a community struggling among other communities. One must not, however, minimise the inventive excavations that constitute the centre of such work. No one here looks for uniquely original essences, either to restore them or to set them in a place of unimpeachable honour. The study of Indian history is viewed by *Subaltern Studies* as an ongoing contest between classes and their disputed epistemologies; similarly, Englishness for the contributors to the Coll and Dodd volume is not given before history, any more than Attic civilisation in Bernal's important study can be extracted from history and made easily and simply to serve as an ahistorical model for superior civilisations.

Nor is this all. The conception of history enabling such work is that official, orthodox, authoritatively national and institutional versions of history tend principally to designate provisional and highly contestable attempts to freeze these versions of history into identities for use. Thus, the official version of British history embedded, say, in the durbars arranged for Queen Victoria's visit to India in 1872 pretends that there is an almost mythical longevity to British rule over India; traditions of Indian service, obeisance and subordination are implicated in these ceremonies so as to create the image of an entire continent's trans-historical identity pressed into compliance before the image of a Britain whose own constructed identity is that it has and must always rule both the waves and India. Whereas these official versions of history attempt to capture it for, in Adornian terms, identitarian authority, the disenchantments, disputatious and systematically sceptical investigations in the innovative work I have cited submit these fabricated identities to a negative dialectic which dissolves them into variously constructed components. What matters a great deal more than the stable essence or identity kept in currency by an official discourse is the contestatory force of a historical method whose material is made up of disparate, but intertwined and interdependent, and above all, overlapping streams of historical experience.

A major set of corollaries derives from this. For, if the chief, most official, forceful and coercive identity is the State with its borders, customs, ruling parties and authorities, and if that is questioned, then it must also be the case that other similarly constructed identities need to be similarly investigated and interrogated. For those of us involved in literature, our education has for the most part been organised under various rubrics – the creative writer, the self-sufficient and autonomous work, the national literature, the separate genres – that have acquired almost fetishistic presence. Now it would be insanity to argue that individual writers and works do not exist, that French, Japanese and Arabic are really the same thing, or that Milton, Tagore and Carpentier are only trivially different variations on the same theme.

Neither would I want to be understood as saying that writing an essay about *Great Expectations* and *Great Expectations*, the novel that Dickens wrote, are the same thing. But I do want to be understood as saying that a focus on identity need imply neither the ontologically given and eternally determined stability of that identity, nor its uniqueness, its utterly irreducible character, its privileged status as something total and complete in and of itself. I would much prefer to interpret a novel as the selection of one mode of writing among many others, and the activity of writing as one social mode among several, and the category of literature as something created, made to serve various worldly aims. Thus, the focus that corresponds with the destabilising and investigative attitudes I have mentioned in connection with active opposition to states and borders is to look at the way a work, for instance, begins *as* a work, begins *from* a political, social and cultural situation, begins *to do* certain things and not others.

Yet the modern history of literary study is strictly bound up with the development of cultural nationalism, whose aim was first to distinguish the national canon, then to maintain it in a place reserved for eminence, authority and aesthetic autonomy. Even where discussions concerning culture in general seemed to rise above national differences in deference to a universal sphere, it is very apparent that hierarchies (as between European and non-European cultures) and ethnic preferences were held to. This is as true of Matthew Arnold as it is for twentieth-century cultural and philological critics whom I revere – Auerbach, Adorno, Spitzer, Blackmur. For them, their culture was in a sense the only culture. The threats against it were largely internal, like fascism and communism, so that what they upheld, after a long period of siege, was European bourgeois humanism. Neither the ethos nor the rigorous training required to install that *bildung* and the extraordinary discipline it demanded has survived, although occasionally one hears the accents of admiration and retrospective discipleship without anything resembling work of the order of *Mimesis*. Instead of European bourgeois humanism, the basic premise of what literary scholars now do is provided by the residue of nationalism with its various derivative authorities, in alliance with professionalism, which divides material into fields, sub-divisions, specialties, accreditations and the like. In so far as it has survived, the doctrine of aesthetic autonomy has dwindled to the formalism associated with one or another professional method, like structuralism, deconstruction, etc.

A look at some of the fields that have arisen since the Second World War, and especially as a result of the newer non-European nationalist struggles with which I began these remarks, reveals a different topography and a different set of imperatives. Most students and teachers of non-European literatures today must take account of the

politics of what they study right at the outset; one cannot postpone discussions of slavery, colonialism, racism, in any serious investigations of modern Indian, African, Latin American, Caribbean and Commonwealth literature. Nor, strictly speaking, is it intellectually responsible to discuss any of these literatures without specific reference to their embattled circumstances either in post-colonial societies or as subjects taught in metropolitan centres where, for example, the study of what are marginalised and/or subjugated literatures is confined to secondary spots on the curricular agenda. By the same token, discussion of literature today cannot hide inside positivism or empiricism and offhandedly acquire the weapons of theory. On the other hand, I think it is a mistake to try to show that the 'other' literatures of Africa and Asia, with their more obviously worldly affiliations to power and politics, can be studied respectably, that is, as if they were in actuality as high, as autonomous, as aesthetically independent and satisfying as French, German or English literatures. The notion of black skin in a white mask is no more serviceable and dignified in literary study than it is in politics. Emulation and mimicry never get one very far.

Contamination is perhaps the wrong word to use here, but some such notion – of literature as hybrid and encumbered, or entangled with a lot of what used to be regarded as extraneous elements – strikes me as *the* essential idea adequate for the revolutionary realities that face us today, in which the contests of the secular world so provocatively inform the texts we both read and write. Moreover, I believe that we can no longer uncomplainingly afford conceptions of history that stress linear development or Hegelian transcendence, any more than we can accept geographic or territorial assumptions assigning centrality to the Natopolitan world, and ontogenetic peripherality to the non-western regions of the world. If configurations like Commonwealth or world literature are to have any meaning at all, it is, therefore, because, by their existence and actuality in the late twentieth century, they first testify to the contests and continuing struggles by virtue of which they have emerged not only as texts but as experiences; and second, because they interact ferociously not only with the whole nationalist basis for the composition and study of literature, but also with the lofty independence and indifference with which it has become customary Eurocentrically to regard the metropolitan western literatures.

What this means for Commonwealth no less than for English, French or American literatures classically differentiated is that once we accept the more actual configuration of literary experiences overlapping with one another and interdependent despite national boundaries and coercively legislated national autonomies, history and geography are transfigured into new maps, new and far less stable

entities, new types of connections. Exile, far from being the fate of those nearly forgotten unfortunates who have been dispossessed and expatriated, becomes something closer to a norm, an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classic canonic enclosures, however much the loss and sadness of exile may also need acknowledgement and registering. Thus changed models and types jostle the older ones. The reader and writer of literature – which itself loses its perdurable forms and accepts the testimonials, revisions, notations of the post-colonial experience, including underground life and prison – no longer needs to tie him or herself to an image of the poet or scholar in isolation, secure, stable, national in identity, class, gender, or profession, but can think and experience with Genet in Palestine or Algeria, with Tayib Saleh as a black man in London, with Jamaica Kincaid in the white world, with Rushdie in India and Britain, and so on.

I suppose what I am getting at is how we might expand the horizons against which the questions of *how* and *what* to read and write are both posed and answered. To paraphrase from a remark made by Auerbach in one of his very last essays, our philological home is the world, and not the nation or even the individual writer. For those of us who are professional students of literature, for whom the literary life is principally teaching and research, there are a number of quite astringent things to take account of here, at the risk both of unpopularity and accusations of megalomania. For in an age of the mass media and what has been called the manufacture of consent, it is little short of Panglossian to assume that the careful reading of a relatively small number of works designated as humanistically, professionally or aesthetically significant is much more than a private activity with some slender public consequences. Texts are protean things; they are tied to circumstances and to politics both large and small, and these require attention and critique. No one can take stock of everything, of course, just as no theory can possibly explain or account for the connections between texts and societies. But to read and write texts cannot ever be neutral activities: there are interests, powers, passions, pleasures entailed, no matter how aesthetic or entertaining the work. Media, political economy, mass institutions: in fine, the tracings of secular power and the influence of the state are now part of what we call literature. And just as it is true that we cannot read literature by men without also reading literature by women – so transfigured has been the shape of literature – it is also true that we cannot deal with the literature of the peripheries without also attending to the literature of the metropolitan centres.

Instead of the partial analysis offered by the various schools of national or systematically theoretical approaches, I propose finally the contrapuntal lines of a global analysis, in which texts and worldly

institutions are seen working together, in which Dickens and Thackeray as London authors are read also as writers informed constitutively by the colonial enterprises of which they were so aware, and in which the literature of one commonwealth is involved in the literature of others. Separatist or nativist enterprises strike me as exhausted, since the ecology of the new and expanded meaning of literature that I have been discussing cannot at all be attached only to one essence, or to the discrete idea of one thing. I do not think, however, that global and contrapuntal analysis can itself be modelled (as earlier notions of comparative literature were modelled) on the notion of a symphony; rather, we have more to do with atonal ensembles, and with such spatial or geographical and rhetorical practices as inflections, limits, constraints, intrusions, inclusions, prohibitions, all of them tending towards elucidations of a complex and uneven topography. While it remains of value in the work of a gifted critic, the intuitive synthesis of the type volunteered by hermeneutic or philological interpretation (whose prototype is to be found in Dilthey) strikes me as the poignant restoration of a serener time than ours.

This brings us round in the end to the question of politics. No country is exempt from the debate about what is to be taught, written or even read. I've often felt envious of theorists for whom either a radical scepticism or deferential reverence before the status quo have been real alternatives. I don't feel them to be, perhaps because my own situation prevents any such luxury, any such detachment and satisfaction. Yet I do believe that some literature is actually good, and that some is of bad quality, and I remain as conservative as anyone when it comes to, if not the redemptive quality inherent in reading a classic rather than staring at a TV screen, then the potential enhancement of one's sensibility and consciousness by it, and by the exercise of one's mind in dealing with it. I suppose the issue reduces itself to what the relatively humdrum and pedestrian daily work of what we do as readers and writers is really about, if, on the one hand, professionalism won't serve and, on the other, a belief in waiting for apocalyptic change won't either. I keep coming back – simplistically and idealistically – to the notion of opposing and alleviating coercive domination, transforming the present by trying rationally and analytically to lift some of its burdens, situating the works of various literatures with reference to each other and to their historical modes of being. What I am really saying is that readers and writers in the configurations and by virtue of the transfigurations taking place around us are now, in fact, secular intellectuals with the archival, expressive, elaborative and moral responsibilities of that role.

JOY JAMES

US policy in Panama

On 20 December 1989 came the latest US invasion of Panama. General Noriega was ousted and taken back to the US to stand trial on drugs charges and opposition leader Endara was installed by the US as president. Panama has always been treated by the US as its own private fiefdom: it was invaded on no less than eleven occasions in the nineteenth century, and no less than five times between 1908 and 1925. Since Panama's nominal independence in 1903, it has been used not only as a virtual colony of the US, but also as a major military base, with the Canal Zone itself under direct US military jurisdiction.

Panama is a Black nation.* Of its 2.2 million population, around 12 per cent are Indigenous (Indian), 13 per cent African, 65 per cent Mestizo and 8 per cent European or white. Whites comprise less than 10 per cent of Panama's population, yet own most of the country's land and economic resources. This oligarchy, with its ruling families, entrenched and supported by the US, has dominated Panamanian politics for most of this century. Endara, a corporate lawyer, is one of its offshoots. In the May 1989 elections, his party, the Alianza Democratica Civilistas, was financed by the US to the tune of \$10m. The Civilistas were described by one Mestiza woman activist, Isabel de Del Resonio, as 'white with money, with cradles of silver. They don't want to see us [Black people]'.¹

A form of apartheid was practised by the US military in the Canal Zone until the late 1960s. Panama, dominated by European ruling

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*Black is used here as a political term denoting 'people of colour' – Indigenous, African and Mestizo Panamanians.

families and the US military, mirrored the racism of the US. 'Whites only' signs dominated the Canal Zone. Panamanian nationalism and resistance also mirrored the civil rights struggles in the US. In January 1964, for example, there were major confrontations when Panamanian students attempted to display the Panamanian flag alongside that of the US outside a High School in the Canal Zone. Canal Zone residents, accompanied by Canal Zone police, attacked the students. In the days that followed, Black students who attempted to place Panamanian flags in the zone were attacked and shot by white zonians. The US military joined the attack as Panamanians fought back: twenty-one people were killed and 450 wounded, the overwhelming majority Panamanian youths.

Today, 'white' and 'coloured' signs are no longer displayed on entrances, swimming pools and drinking fountains; but Panamanians still remember them and point out the gates and doorways that displayed the apartheid laws. The extent to which racial codes have changed in Panama largely depends upon one's wealth. According to Isabel: 'Before, the [private] schools were all white; today, if you have money, even if your child is Black he can attend.' Nonetheless, in the US-controlled Canal Zone, Black Panamanians still face economic and racial discrimination from the US Southern Command. They also confront discrimination from the *Civilistas*/oligarchy.

A war against drugs?

One strand in this latest attempt to re-establish undisputed US control over Panama can be traced back almost twenty years – to Richard Nixon's declaration in 1971 that the 'war on drugs' was a 'national emergency'. Nixon named Manuel Noriega, then head of Panamanian security, as instrumental in the drug trade. And in May 1971, John Ingersoll, Director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, drafted a plan which included assassination for worldwide US 'clandestine law enforcement'. The subsequent White House plan to assassinate both Noriega and the then Panamanian head of state, General Torrijos, was quashed, however: the Watergate scandal had begun to break. But the rhetoric of the Nixon administration was to be invoked nearly two decades later in the Bush administration's rationalisations for 'Operation Just Cause', the State Department code name for the invasion of Panama, and the inauguration of the current regime.

Yet does this rationale for the invasion (that it was a law enforcement response to drug trafficking), necessary though it was to mobilise congressional and popular support, really stand up to scrutiny? First, it should be noted that Noriega had, in fact, worked with the CIA since 1960, when, as a cadet at a Peruvian military

academy, he had provided information to the US Defence Intelligence Agency on left-wing students. For nearly three decades he regularly provided information to the US government and the CIA. He became, too, a 'key asset' in the US war against Nicaragua, allowing the contras to train on Coiba Island off Panama when direct US military support to them was prohibited.²

Moreover, US government agencies had been involved with organised crime in drug trafficking since just after the Second World War.³ More recently, the Iran-Contragate hearings have shown how intertwined covert operations to fund the contras were with drug trafficking on a large scale.⁴ As Senator Kerry put it in one session of the hearings: 'It is clear that there is a networking of drug trafficking through the contras . . . [and] in the name of national security, we can produce specific law enforcement officials who will tell you that they have been called off drug trafficking investigations because the CIA is involved . . .'⁵

Such promotion of the drug trade and the failure to prosecute any US agencies or agents involved in drug trafficking effectively discredits the rationale of 'law enforcement' for the invasion of Panama. What the US government was seeking to enforce under cover of its anti-drugs rhetoric was adherence to US regional policy for Central America.

US control of Panama had begun to unravel with the 1968 coup that brought Torrijos to power and ousted Arnulfo Arias Madrid, Endara's mentor and a member of the oligarchy. Madrid had dominated Panamanian politics up to that time with, in the words of a *New York Times* report, a 'mix of socialism, fascism, racism, mysticism and nationalism'.⁶

Torrijos's domestic policies of economic and land reforms dismantled the hegemony of the Panamanian white oligarchy. Indigenous, African and Mestizo Panamanians began to make impressive gains in education, health, housing and employment. New hospitals, health centres, houses, schools and universities were built. More doctors, nurses and teachers were trained. In just under two decades, infant mortality declined from 40 per cent to 19.4 per cent and life expectancy increased by over nine years.⁷ Indigenous communities were granted autonomy and protection for their traditional lands.⁸

Foreign policy under Torrijos was just as radical a break with the past. His policies of Panamanian sovereignty over the Canal and military bases, of regular contacts and exchange of information with the Cuban government, directly threatened US hegemony in Central America and contradicted its regional policy. Increasing Panamanian nationalism and protest, including Torrijos' threat to blow up the Canal locks if the US did not comply, led to the signing of the Panama Canal Treaty in Washington DC on 7 September 1977 by President

Carter, under which the Canal and all military bases were to be transferred to Panama by the year 2000. The treaty was deeply unpopular with the American Right.

What placed Torrijos and later Noriega on US assassination lists was not the alleged criminality of their governments, but their circumvention of US policy in Panama and the region. Anti-communism, racism and intervention were the elements of US policy in Panama and the region, but under the guise of a 'war on drugs'.

When Omar Torrijos died in 1981 in a 'mysterious' plane crash, which a former Panamanian army officer later attributed to the CIA,* the reforms of the 'people's power movements' which had developed during the Torrijos regime were blocked. Noriega, who had worked for the US for over two decades, eventually became the de facto head of state. With the untimely death of Torrijos and the change in Panamanian government, the progressive reforms of the 1970s began to come to a halt; yet, despite the corruption of the Noriega government, a number of Torrijos' policies were allowed to continue.

Economic destabilisation: the erosion of Black life

The invasion, however, was only the culmination of an economic war the US had been waging against Panama. The standard of living for the majority of Panamanians had already begun to drop from the mid-1980s onwards as a result of the IMF austerity programmes implemented by President Bartletta (elected in 1984).

Government revenues before the invasion were down by 45 per cent because of the US economic war against Panama. The US paid neither its assessments for using the Canal (the treaty called for US\$10m each year for services) nor fees garnered by the Canal. US businesses were prohibited from paying Panamanian taxes and ships bearing the Panamanian flag were denied access to US ports. From 1987 economic sanctions and the embargo caused great hardship. Malnutrition began to develop among children, particularly in the countryside where land distribution programmes were rendered ineffectual. Panamanian working-class people who had acquired land in the 1960s and 1970s lacked the resources to cultivate it. In the Canal Zone, where Panamanians employed by the US are presumably more financially secure, racial discrimination means that most of the Panamanian workers do low-paying maintenance jobs.

* According to Amnesty International, in June 1987, Colonel Roberto Diaz Herrera, PDF second in command and a close relative of Torrijos, accused Noriega of electoral fraud and political murder, and of plotting with the CIA to assassinate Torrijos.⁹

The two years of sanctions meant a 25 per cent drop in economic production, and rising unemployment. According to the 60,000 strong Federation of Workers of the Republic of Panama (30 per cent of unionised workers are in its ranks), unemployment rose from 10-11 per cent in 1987 to 11-16 per cent in 1988, and was projected at 17.5 per cent for 1989. Poverty has risen steeply: while before 1987, 33 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line, in 1988 this rose to 40.2 per cent and was 44 per cent by 1989. And trade unionists have to deal not only with growing unemployment but also with union busting. According to the Federation, as the embargo took effect and unemployment grew, unions were weakened or destroyed. Collective bargaining was suspended and campaigns were initiated against trade union officials.* Before the invasion, national labour organisers were being laid off. Afterwards, union leaders and organisers were searched for and detained by the new US/Panamanian government and police forces.

By 1989, production was down 50 per cent in the rural areas. Agricultural workers lacked farm machinery, fertilisers and resources derived from petroleum: Panama has no petroleum. The US embargo and economic sanctions prohibited the import of fertilisers from the US and Europe and the sale of Panamanian agricultural products like beef and sugar to the US. Panamanian small farmers faced increasing hardships with the US embargo, as did rural indigenous communities. Indigenous rights to autonomous control of their land and special government assistance had been granted under Torrijos and continued 'to greater or lesser degrees under . . . Paredes and . . . Noriega . . . Political turmoil and fiscal restraints in Panama since mid-1987 . . . stalled government efforts to improve conditions in rural Indian lands.'¹¹ Before the US embargo, Indigenous workers moved to Panama City in search of jobs; in the aftermath of the war, urban Indigenous populations are returning to their traditional land for economic self-sufficiency. However, that economic autonomy is being threatened by militarists and 'developers' and encroachment by the current government upon Indigenous land and land rights.¹²

Black women and the crisis

The Panamanian economic crisis, whether in the urban or rural areas, has been borne most heavily by Black women. Panamanian women

* Until recently the AFL-CIO financially supported the Federation's Institute of Free Labor Development. According to the Federation, as the crisis developed, the Panamanian Union was told to protest in the streets against Noriega and that if it did not support US policy in Panama, its economic support would be ended. The AFL-CIO is now trying to organise a parallel organisation to the Federation and the Institute of Free Labor has been closed.¹⁰

workers, as in the US, are primarily segregated in low-paying service sector jobs: as domestics, cleaners, store-shop clerks, manual workers and office workers. US sanctions aggravated the situation of thousands of female-headed households. Malnutrition and starvation have been steadily increasing among the Panamanian poor.

El Frente Unido Mujeres Contra Aggression (FUMCA) was formed in July 1987 in response to the US economic attack on Panama. FUMCA is composed of twenty-two community-based women's organisations or groups. At its last national congress in Panama City, on 8 March 1989, International Women's Day, 3,000 women were addressed by the then Commander-in-Chief Noriega. Most FUMCA women are members of the Partido de Revolucionario Democrática (PRD), the party of Torrijos and Noriega. FUMCA leadership has described the organisation as the 'Feminina Frente' of the PRD. The PRD is a party of the military, workers, feminists, students and intellectuals. As the party of progressive and conservative nationalists with different economic and political agendas, it was held together by the external threat of US intervention.

Women, states FUMCA, had the most to lose under a 'yanqui military pact' which militarised Panamanian resources and placed them under foreign management. FUMCA reported the minimum wage at 75 cents per hour, with women earning on an average \$250 a month (US currency is the paper currency in Panama), with a maximum of \$450. Milk costs 65 cents a carton, a loaf of bread 45 cents. Because of the embargo and sanctions, construction virtually stopped. The resulting housing shortage means rising rents, overcrowded housing and increasing rents migration – all disruptions of family life.

Before the invasion, FUMCA had organised around Panamanian 'national defence' as entailing the political and economic rights of women. It had also attempted, without success, to establish contact with women in the opposition and the Canal Zone. But none answered the call (via FUMCA's national radio programme) to form a women's front against foreign intervention – the race and class privileges of Civilista women obviously destroying any form of sisterhood with Black Panamanian women struggling against poverty. FUMCA also opposed the hierarchy of the Catholic Church which, according to Isabel de Del Resonio, FUMCA treasurer, aligned itself with the oligarchy, urging women to demonstrate against the then government by banging pots in the streets as middle-class women did in the CIA-orchestrated overthrow of Allende in Chile. Prior to the invasion, FUMCA collected and delivered clothes, food and medicine to poor women and offered classes for women in physical and psychological self-defence in case of a military attack.

The US military presence in Panama – some 13,000 troops were

routinely stationed there – also led to violence against and the exploitation of women. US troops provided the base for the prostitution industry in Panama. According to FUMCA, the sexual, racist violence against Indigenous women by US soldiers is particularly severe. As Isabel de Del Resonio put it, ‘Gringos would rape and kill women, but the US army would just ship them out rather than allow them to be tried in Panamanian courts’. For decades the US, although maintaining the right to jurisdiction and extradition over Panamanians, never allowed Panama jurisdiction over US troops stationed within Panama. For Isabel, if the US military never turned over any US troops accused of raping or murdering Panamanian women, why should Panamanian women have wanted to turn Noriega over to the US?

Among the difficulties facing women, FUMCA identified the large percentage of female-headed households and adolescents without jobs; ‘nourishment pensions’ (*‘las pensiones alimenticias’*) as the only subsistence for large numbers of children; women’s exploitation in the labour market, and the fact that the weight of the crisis was borne most heavily by women. All this led to specific demands made on the former government by FUMCA, including social security as a right for women and men and the abolition of work codes that undermined workers’ rights and wages. It also advocated the expansion and development of family laws with community input; publicly supported programmes for the rising numbers of children and pregnant women in poverty; full health rights; the adjustment to new economic conditions without cutting services to women workers and collective decision-making between government agencies and community groups; and increasing the role of women in government leadership.

Not surprisingly, FUMCA’s policy proposals have not been well received by the US/Endara government. Many FUMCA women were fired from their jobs following the invasion, and driven ‘underground’ or into detention camps, according to Esmeralda Brown, co-ordinator of the New York-based sister organisation, Women’s Workshop in the Americas. FUMCA had also begun to develop into a forum on national and international policies, as witnessed by its affiliation with the GDR-based Women’s International Democratic Federation and the Cuban-based Frente Continental de Mujeres Contra Intervención (Continental Women’s Front Against Intervention). This implied a regional and international perspective not shared by the conservative US/Endara government – in particular, FUMCA’s stand against US intervention in Latin America.

US militarism in Central America

US domination of Panama and a continuing military presence there is

seen by US policy-makers as crucial for its domination of the region. Within one month of the passing of the Torrijos-Carter treaty, which would have ultimately ceded the Canal Zone to Panamanian control and lost the US its massive military base there, president-to-be Ronald Reagan was campaigning for the treaty's abrogation, warning of the potential loss to US 'security' and 'financial interests'.

The US violated the Panama Canal Treaty routinely in acts prohibited by international law and the US constitution (which states that treaties supersede national law). The Torrijos-Carter Treaty prohibited the use of the US military outside the protection of the Canal. Yet in January of 1985, 1986 and 1987, the US military and the Panamanian Defence Forces engaged in joint military exercises unrelated to Canal security in Panama.¹³ Since 1987 no US military operation has been coordinated with the Joint Panamanian Commission, although the Torrijos-Carter treaty calls for such cooperation. Uncoordinated US military flights and sea operations jeopardised commercial flights and damaged the fishing industry. On land, US soldiers freely harassed Panamanians with military manoeuvres in neighbourhood and city districts – such manoeuvres would stop traffic in commercial districts in downtown Panama City for hours. This type of psychological warfare against the population and manoeuvre training for the invasion left an estimated twenty US troops dead before 20 December – not in confrontations with Panamanians but in US combat exercises. One FUMCA representative wryly commented that US troops 'crash and explode and no one is confronting them. Bombs explode on base . . . They fought with a coconut tree and it resulted in three deaths.'

For the US, Panama was strategically important for its war against Nicaragua – but Panama under Noriega also became a member of the Contadora group which sought a resolution of the conflict. In 1985, US National Security Advisor Poindexter met with Noriega in an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate Panama's departure from the group. Poindexter also sought – again unsuccessfully – the use of the Panamanian Defence Forces for a southern front against Nicaragua.*

Nonetheless, as the congressional hearings of Autumn 1986 on the Iran/Contra affair showed, 'the US Southern Command, located in the zone, played a major role in coordination, intelligence gathering, and delivery of supplies to the US-funded counter-revolutionaries

* Bush also sought the reinstatement of Nicolas Bartletta as president of Panama. (Late in 1985 Noriega had helped to organise the dismissal of the Panamanian president Bartletta, who was elected in 1984 amid accusations of PDF electoral fraud.) Bartletta is a personal friend and former student of former US Secretary of State George Shultz. The Panamanian government refused this and the other requests as violating Panamanian sovereignty.

attempting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government'.¹⁴ One objective of the invasion which has been obscured was perhaps the removal of Noriega for 'doublecrossing' his employers. For Noriega had not only been dragging his feet in the contra war; he was also, as a business venture, providing Panamanian free trade zones in Colon as a centre for the duty free transshipment of goods for Cuba and Nicaragua to circumvent the US trade embargo.

It was not only Nicaragua, however, that had to be brought to heel. The State Department made the US position abundantly clear in a letter to Senator J. Helms:

The State Department shares your view that when the Carter-Torrijos treaties are being renegotiated, the prolongation of the US military presence in the Panama Canal area till well after the year 2000 should be brought up for discussion. The continuing power of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the activities of the Salvadoran insurgents* and the influence of communist Cuba in the region make it urgently necessary for the United States to strengthen its position in Central America.

The continuing polarization of the political forces in Panama may lead to a crisis in the country which would pose a serious threat to stability in the region.¹⁶

The letter went on to call for steps 'to bring about the resignation of General Noriega and to set up an interim government' which would safeguard 'US strategic interests'.

In the view of a fact-finding delegation, sponsored by the Black Veterans for Social Justice, which visited Panama in September 1989, the Bush agenda would finally turn out to be 'a swap of the Canal for long-term, guaranteed US bases in Panama' – and the crisis would be escalated 'until a Panamanian government renegotiates the Torrijos-Carter treaty, and the US presence in Panama becomes permanent'.

The invasion

Under the provisions of the Torrijos-Carter treaty, December 1989 was to be a critical month in the progress to Panamanian decolonisation. Not coincidentally, it was the month in which the US escalated the war. Under the treaty, as of 31 December 1989, the Panamanian government was to establish its own appointee as head of the Panama Canal Commission. He was then to implement plans for the 31 December 1999 transfer of the Canal and all of its property and

* Air bases and listening posts in the zone have, according to Weeks's and Zimbalist's analysis of the US military role in Panama, 'played a continuing and important role in the Salvadoran civil war'. And, in the November 1989 FMLN offensive against the Salvadoran government, hospitals administered by the US military in Panama were used to service wounded Salvadoran soldiers.¹⁵

assets (including military bases) to the Panamanian people: all US bases must be out of Panama by 1 January 2000. But on 4 December 1989, in violation of the Treaty, President George Bush appointed his own nominee as head of the Commission.

One week later, the Panamanian National Assembly declared Panama in a 'state of war' and Noriega, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, as head of state. The US State Department and major media routinely reported this as Panama having 'declared war on the US'. On 16 December 1989 a US officer was killed in a confrontation with Panamanian Defence Forces.¹⁷ Four US officers in civilian dress had entered a neighbourhood which housed the PDF command where, some months earlier, on 3 December, a coup attempt had been made¹⁸ (since that date, a US curfew prohibited its soldiers from entering Panamanian territory without authorisation from commanding officers). The US account of the shooting stated initially that the officers were unarmed. But the Panamanian government maintained that they were armed, and that the US officers had opened fire first, shooting a woman, a child and an elderly man. The compound is located in a poor, African and Indigenous neighbourhood. Two days after this incident, on 18 December, a US soldier who felt 'threatened' shot a Panamanian police officer who approached to question him in a laundromat.

Another two days later, on 20 December, the US invaded.

The invasion of Panama was the largest US military operation since the Vietnam War. It involved some 26,000 troops and entailed the largest parachute drop since the Second World War. For weeks, the US had been mobilising troops at Fort Bragg in readiness. Congress, however, was informed of the attack only hours beforehand. In one sense, the invasion was a last resort. It followed on the failure of the US-backed opposition parties, despite the millions of dollars invested in them, seriously to challenge the government, and the failure of US-backed coups (of which that of 3 October had been the most recent).

Nor was the invasion the almost bloodless walkover that the US State Department would have us believe. Civilian neighbourhoods were carpet-bombed. The Dignity Battalions, nationalist pro-government paramilitary squads developed by Noriega after the 3 October coup attempt, put up a strong resistance. While the State Department claimed (some three weeks after the invasion) that civilian casualties numbered just 200, the Spanish-language press both within and outside the US (Inter Press Service, Echo of Mexico) cited over 2,000 civilian deaths and approximately 70,000 casualties. Only the Spanish Press (*El Diario*), the African-American Press (*Amsterdam News*, *City Sun*) and alternative media (WBAI-NY Public Radio) bothered to report Panamanian civilian casualties. New York City's *El Diario* carried photos and reportage of mass graves dug by the US

army to conceal the actual death count. The National Lawyer's Guild, returning from a fact-finding mission in Panama in early February, also reported the presence of mass graves.

The possibility of a protracted guerrilla war, which the US press began reporting two days after the invasion, and which the Pentagon and Southern Command had feared, was dispelled with the surrender of key PDF forces on 26 December. Major Ivan Gaytan, trained in the US, surrendered a vital PDF base, stating: 'I personally know the Americans quite well. They aren't going to put troops up against our guerrillas because they wouldn't put soldiers in another Vietnam. We feared they would simply bomb the hell out of our area'.¹⁹

The depiction of mostly male casualties in US media reporting obscured the reality of the large numbers of children and women civilians injured or killed in the war. The bombing of Chorillos and other poor neighbourhoods had left over 20,000 people homeless and food supplies scarce. US reporting also obscured the fact that women participated not only in the Dignity Battalions (as did some children) but in the military as well. The Base De Instruccion Femenina Rufina Alfaro, the women's military detachment or battalion, is named after Rufina Alfaro, the woman who made the first call, in 1821, for Panamanian independence and sovereignty from Spain. In the neighbourhood where Rufina Alfaro is located, US troops made several incursions in one week, pointing artillery at homes, flying low over houses in helicopters in pre-dawn manoeuvres. The women's military centre is surrounded by a high fence, across the street another fence is erected around an empty lot. On both fences and the front of the building are cloth banners in Spanish and English, put there against the US troops who come to harass them. One banner reads '*Ay Que Miedo, Gringo, Ja Ja Ja*' ('Oh What Fear Gringo, Ha, Ha, Ha'), another 'Don't Forget Vietnam'.

What the Panama invasion also revealed is a further adaptation of military technology to, and a development of, so-called 'low-intensity conflicts' against Third World countries. Although this strategy usually involves proxy soldiers, contras or mercenaries, the Panama invasion revealed the Pentagon's involvement. 'This is the first time in the new post-cold-war world there has been an operation by any country where a mixture of conventional and unconventional forces was used in a measured way against the type of threat the US will face in the future. The Panama operation outlined the rationale for the type of forces we will require', General Edward Meyer, former chief of staff of the army, is quoted as saying in *US News*.

Revealing an obsession with high tech, the Pentagon used eight \$50 million F-117A Stealth fighters to drop two 2,000-pound bombs on a communications site near Rio Hato.²⁰ The Pentagon reported originally that the bombs were dropped in an open field with no

injuries; weeks later, new reports stated that the Stealths bombed communications centres in Panama City. To patrol the cities, the Army's Seventh Light Infantry Division, trained in urban warfare, used nightvision equipment developed in the 1980s. This allows soldiers to see and shoot in the dark; stun guns were also used. In the words of General Frederick Woerner, former chief of the Southern Command: 'Low intensity conflict does not mean simplistic equipment. In Third World conflicts, the importance of sophistication increases, rather than decreases, since you're dependent on a more precise, not massive, application of force.'

Panama is now a state policed by the US Southern Command. The US government and major media report that 5,300 Panamanians are being detained 'for questioning' in camps. Esmeralda Brown, of the Women's Workshop in the Americas, and the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) in New York City report over 7,000. An article in the *New York Times*, headed 'US is releasing invasion captives (19 January), failed to note that the US, after releasing Panamanians, has also rearrested or detained them. Detainees are held without charge and the names of prisoners have not been released. Americas Watch, a human rights organisation, reports US violations of Geneva Convention accords on the treatment of prisoners and the denial of the basic rights of due process in preventative detention. Since the US has never declared war on Panama, those incarcerated are not referred to as prisoners of war but as detainees. If someone's name appears on a list (the US had already developed a list of some 6,000 government employees, civilians, educators and nationalists who were prohibited entry into the US), then he or she can be picked up and detained without charge. Recently, one Panamanian doctor received a telephone call at home to go to the local police station for questioning. On arrival, he was arrested by US troops, placed aboard an army helicopter and flown to the Empire Range, a US detention camp.²¹

The media

US media coverage of the invasion signified overwhelming approval. Bush's dramatic rise in the opinion polls* as a result was signified by ABC on 31 January under the title 'From a wimp to a world-class leader'. One of the most frightening assumptions promoted in major media coverage was the 'right' of assassination. Most reporting of the invasion by the major networks, unquestioningly reiterated that assassinations are legitimate government operations and invasion a

*It is not always certain who *New York Times*/CBS/Gallup were polling. For example, a poll taken in January by CBS News stated that 92 per cent of Panamanians interviewed approved of the invasion; what many news sources failed to report was that the interviews were conducted in affluent (largely white) neighbourhoods.

mechanism for their implementation. Throughout the five hours of 'live' coverage on 20 December, ABC news anchorman Peter Jennings took the position that the problem was not the invasion of a sovereign nation to 'eliminate' its head of state and the bombing of a civilian population (the public had after all been prepared for this with the invasion of Libya), but that the US had not 'got' him yet and that the 'hunt' was not successful.

Control over the coverage was tight. US journalists in the Pentagon 'pool' – those flown into Panama by the Bush administration to cover the invasion – were restricted to the US military bases during the first hours of the invasion, thus ensuring there would be no coverage of civilian casualties and bombings. No other US press outside the Pentagon pool of journalists were allowed into Panama, and a Spanish photographer who sent photos of casualties to US Spanish-language papers was killed by US troops in crossfire outside a tourist hotel.

US media coverage of the invasion failed to question the US assumption of international jurisdiction over drug law enforcement as a pretext for violating its 1977 Panama Canal Treaty and Panamanian sovereignty. Nor was the use of Panama as a military base for US intervention in Central America examined critically.

The racism in US reporting on the invasion was rampant. *Newsweek's* 15 January issue described Noriega at the time of his surrender and arrest as 'a whipped and beaten little man' and 'a mere shadow of the machete-waving gringo-hating dictator'. And the sexism of the invasion 'hype' was revealed in Bush's pronouncements that the US invaded to save American lives and American womanhood, or, as Secretary of Defence Dick Cheney phrased it, the PDF had also sexually threatened a 'military wife'. The US has not invaded El Salvador or Guatemala or attacked the contras to safeguard 'American lives', although those governments and the contras have been responsible for deaths of US citizens, as well as sexual assaults on and the political torture of US women religious and peace activists.

Perhaps no writing reveals the convergence of classism, racism and sexism that shaped the US invasion better than the piece by Frederick Kempe in the popular weekly *Newsweek*.²² Kempe describes Noriega as a 'two-bit intelligence chief from a Banana and Banking Republic'. His description of Bush's December 1976 meeting with Noriega, subtitled 'Bully vs. Brahmin', is particularly revealing.

The two intelligence chiefs contrasted in style and substance. Bush was lanky and refined, raised by a Brahmin New England family. He towered over the five-foot five-inch Noriega. Noriega was mean-streets Mestizo, the bastard son of his father's domestic. Noriega offered his usual damp, limp handshake to Bush's firm grip. They were clearly uncomfortable with each other.

Noriega's continued survival blemished Bush's anti-drug efforts and underlined increased American impotence in the region.

Sensationalised like a safari hunt, with international policy and law treated as no more than a game between the romanticised 'hunter' and the animalised 'hunted', the devastating effects of the invasion on Panamanian people, on law and democratic policies was submerged.

* * *

The invasion of Panama and seizure of Noriega were carried out under the pretext of the US war, both national and international, against drugs. And it is worth looking, a little more clearly, at the nature of that 'war'. The effectiveness of measures to reduce consumption at home, the military-style nature of the campaign – only one-third of funding is directed at rehabilitation, compared to two-thirds for policing – have been criticised in the media. (What is not examined, however, is whether the programme is intended to discourage drug use.)

Similarly, the success of drug wars abroad is also questioned. The US is attempting to organise the militaries in Peru, Bolivia and Colombia into a force armed and directed by the US, ostensibly for drug enforcement. Yet, according to senior US officials in Lima, quoted in one mid-Western paper, the *Dayton Daily News*, 'US supported interdiction efforts in Huallaga Valley in central Peru were unsuccessful and the drug war was not winnable in Latin America.' But such criticisms miss the point. These forces are, in fact, being used in counter-insurgency wars.²³ For example, the anti-communist nature of the drug wars in the Andean countries has led to attacks on M19 in Colombia and Shining Path in Peru which have provided assistance to peasants growing coca leaves. The US military has routed out guerrillas who have been providing protection to peasants from drug lords, thus allowing the local military to take over as 'protection'.

The US is currently, under the guise of the eradication of drugs, consolidating its political, military and economic hegemony through destruction of progressive movements with counterinsurgency wars; it also seeks control of the 'informal economy' of narcotrafficking. US covert policy does not seek to destroy the drug trade; it attempts to control it. US media play a significant role in shaping popular perceptions and understanding about the 'war on drugs'. Such disinformation set the stage for the invasion of Panama; US nationalism and racism allowed the invasion to be implemented without significant domestic resistance.

What the 'communist threat' or 'red menace' did for interventionists and fascists in the 1950s and 1960s, what terrorism and anti-Arab

racism permitted racists and militarists in the 1980s, 'narcoterrorism' – a drug war hysteria that legitimises state violence and vigilante violence against African and Latin people – will condone in the 1990s. The ignorance of the US public about the nature of drug trafficking fuels the circumvention of law and the enactment of repressive and racist policies in US domestic and foreign politics. The war on drugs ensures the continued militarisation of US domestic and foreign policy into the twenty-first century. That the consumers and 'pushers' have been depicted in mass media as African and Latin, both within and outside the US, ensures that the war on drugs will be a racial war. That the majority of the profits from the drug trade accrue to the wealthy (or government agencies) reveals its class nature.²⁴ And, as always, women and children will bear much of its brunt. Before the invasion, FUMCA, in its organising pamphlet, 'Porque Las Mujeres Somos Parte de Esta Lucha', showed how defending national sovereignty was part of women's political history in Panama (citing among other things Rufina Alfaro and women's leadership in the 'popular power movements' in the 1960s and 1970s). FUMCA has stressed repeatedly that the conditions of women's lives demand activism: 'Women, half of the population, realise that foreign aggression threatens the stability of their homes and their children's futures.' And, at the conference last November, Panamanian women warned how deadly US policy was to Panama. In Isabel de Del Resonio's words:

There are many [US] women whose children are here and they do not know what they are doing or what the US government is doing . . . We're trying to bring about a rebirth of our culture . . . and they [the US government] are thinking about killing our people.

References

- 1 This article is a response to a visit to Panama in November 1989 and much of it is based on interviews and information gathered at that time. The Center for International Political Studies, an independent research organisation affiliated to the University of Panama, had sponsored an International Conference Against Aggression in Central America: the case of Panama (26-28 November 1989). Topics included 'Low-intensity conflict', 'Narco-trafficking and money laundering'; 'Political and economic effect of US sanctions against Panama', 'Human rights'; and 'Violation of the Torrijos-Carter treaties'. Over 100 US citizens, including elected state and city representatives, university professors, trade unionists, clergy and activists, participated.
- 2 See US Foreign Relations Subcommittee report, 'Drugs, Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy', (December 1988) which described the US employment of

- Noriega as 'one of the most serious foreign policy failures for the United States'.
- 3 See Vince Bielski and Dennis Bernstein, 'NSC, CIA and drugs: the cocaine connection', *Covert Action Information Bulletin* (No. 28, summer 1987).
- 4 See *ibid.*, and *Inside the Shadow Government*, Declaration of Plaintiffs' Counsel, filed by the Christie Institute, US District Court, Miami, Florida, 31 March 1988.
- 5 See 1986 Executive Session of the Iran/Contra hearings and Bielski and Bernstein, *op. cit.*
- 6 See *New York Times* (28 January 1990).
- 7 Ministerio de Planificacion Politica Economica, 'Lo Que Ha Hecho El Proceso Revolucionario por Nuestro Pais' (Panama City, MPPE, 1989).
- 8 Peter H. Herlihy, 'Panama's quiet revolution: Comarca homelands and Indian rights' in *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Vol. 13, no. 3, 1989).
- 9 See Amnesty International, *Panama: assault on human rights* (March 1988).
- 10 Interview with Panamanian labour leaders (26-28 November 1989), Panama City.
- 11 Herlihy, *op. cit.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 See John Weeks and Andrew Zimbalist, 'The failure of intervention in Panama: humiliation in the backyard', in *Third World Quarterly* (January 1989).
- 14 See John Weeks and Andrew Zimbalist, *op. cit.*
- 15 See John Weeks and Andrew Zimbalist, *op. cit.*
- 16 Letter from Assistant Secretary J.E. Fox of the State Department to Senator J. Helms, (26 March 1987).
- 17 Thomas L. Friedman, 'Panama shooting condemned by US' in *New York Times* (18 December 1989).
- 18 See Hugh Hamilton, 'Lack of popular support thwarted coup against Noriega' in *The City Sun* (11-17 October 1989).
- 19 *Wall Street Journal* (27 December 1989).
- 20 See R. Harris, 'Out of the clouds: secret stealth fighter used in Panama raid gets more exposure' in *Wall Street Journal* (27 December 1989).
- 21 *New York Times* (19 January 1990).
- 22 *Newsweek* (15 January 1990).
- 23 More than \$260m was approved for 1990 drug control programmes in Colombia (\$90m), Peru (\$70m), Bolivia (\$97m). At least six US agencies are involved in drug enforcement in the Andean countries, including the CIA, DEA, and State Department. US 'advisers' led Peruvian troops in a 'frontal assault' military operation in Peru (*Los Angeles Times*). And nine US-piloted Huey UH-1 helicopters, armed with twin M-60 machine guns on the doors, ferry units of six Peruvian police officers and two US Drug Enforcement agents in raids at supposed jungle cocaine labs. DEA-fortified military bases are located in the heart of Shining Path territories, while US troops are deployed to secure areas to train the Peruvian military in its war against the Sendero Luminoso guerrillas (*Washington Post*).
- 24 See Waltraud Queiser Morales, 'The war on drugs: a new US national security doctrine?' in *Third World Quarterly* (3 July 1989). DEA place the retail value of illegal drugs at \$150 billion. Most of the profits remain in the US (or banks in western Europe). Source countries in Latin America receive only 10 per cent of the drug profits, according to Morales, who writes that Colombia, which refines 75 per cent of cocaine, received \$1-2 billion in foreign exchange from drug profits in 1987.

A. SIVANANDAN

The enigma of the colonised: reflections on Naipaul's arrival

I never liked Naipaul. I could never read him without a sense of self-betrayal, I could not enter into his stories without being turned off from myself. There was a smell of burnt belongings in his books as well as the smell of burning icons. But the icons he burnt were mine, those of the colonised not of the coloniser. Them he preserved, mine he burnt for them.

I was just beginning to come out of the self-hate that colonialism had implanted in me when I first encountered Naipaul – a fellow colonial who knew my condition better than I did, described it with a fine and acute understanding, and then delivered me up to my subjugation in the pursuit of his own deliverance.

That sense of betraying and being betrayed, around which the whole colonised psyche seems to revolve, has since hung like a vapour over all his writings – warning me against myself, my selling out on myself, my people, on my slave and colonial history. And that he had so soon, so readily become acceptable to the English literati, so easily assimilable, gave that warning flesh. For the moment ‘they’ accept you, you are finished, completed; the moment they adopt you, you have sold out, you have become the object of their history, you have no existence apart from them. Even to lay claim to their language and render it more exquisite than they is an act of self-betrayal – because they re-claim you in their language.

Now, with the *Enigma of Arrival*,¹ I am beginning to see that Naipaul was an Englishman from the beginning – not British, English – wholly, uniquely English. Because his imagination is English, of

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England – of its woods, trees, birds, seas, seasons, stories, lives, loves, poets, kings . . . – and his reality is an imagined reality.

Or so it was till his arrival in England, his second arrival, not at Southampton or in Earl's Court or in Dolphin Square or Gloucester or Oxford even, but here, now, some twenty years later, in a valley in Wiltshire, 'in the ancient heart of England', somewhere near Salisbury. 'It was almost the first English town I had got to know, the first I had been given some idea of, from the reproduction of the Constable painting of Salisbury Cathedral in my third-standard reader. Far away in my tropical island, before I was ten.' Salisbury was there in his imagination all along, from the time he was ten, and Constable and the Cathedral, they had been real to him all along – and now that reality was being defined, was materialising before his very eyes. The picture in the third-standard reader was taking life. His Englishness was taking flesh.

Naipaul's imagination is English, and the language he imagines in is English. 'Apart from the romance of the Constable reproduction, the knowledge I brought to my setting was linguistic. I knew that "avon" originally meant only river, just as "hound" originally just meant a dog, any kind of dog.' In turn, the language gives his imagination shape, identity, habitation – and shape, identity, habitation are all English. 'I knew that both elements of Waldenshaw – the name of the village and the manor in whose grounds I was – I knew that both "walden" and "shaw" meant wood.' And that materialisation of the language, in its turn, gives flight to his imagination: 'One further reason why, apart from the fairytale feel of the snow and the rabbits, I thought I saw a forest.' He 'thought' he saw a forest. A forest is the logical outcome of 'walden' and 'shaw', the logical extension of 'wood', the logical accompaniment to 'the fairytale feel of the snow and the rabbits'.

But he was still nervous of new places, felt his 'strangeness' there, his solitude and 'every excursion into a new part of the country . . . was for me like a tearing at an old scab'. The scab of memory, surely, and of discovery, rather than of nervousness? He has been here before in the country of his mind and he is in an ecstasy of panic lest he not discover it, un-cover it.

Yet, he is an intruder, does not quite belong, an 'oddity' in the grounds of a half-neglected estate, 'full of reminders of its Edwardian past', itself 'an oddity among the estates and big houses of the valley'. And he feels that his 'presence in that old valley was part of something like an upheaval, a change in the course of the history of the country'. As big as that, his presence, an upheaval in this country – that is how sensitive he is about his intrusion into it. But nowhere does he question the intrusion of this country into his own, nowhere does he show the same sensibility to the presence of Britain in Trinidad. He

does not see it as an 'upheaval', 'a change in the course of the history' of his 'own' country – one which justifies, authorises, not just explains, his presence here. His sensibility is the sensibility of a supplicant, his 'place' is as ordained by England, he sees history (his own included) through English eyes. For him, as for that other shameless Anglophile, the American, Eliot, 'history is now and England'.

What he sees of this England, this real England, he sees with 'the literary eye', with the literature derived from England's language, 'with a knowledge of the language and the history of the language and the writing' that allows him to find 'a special kind of past' in what he sees. Jack's father-in-law is 'a Wordsworthian figure: bent, exaggeratedly bent, going gravely about his peasant tasks, as if in an immense Lake District solitude'. And Jack's geese – 'high-headed, dung-dropping geese' – develop 'a kind of historical life' for him, 'something that went beyond the idea of medieval peasantry, old English country ways, and the drawings of geese in children's books'. So that when, longing 'to be put in touch with the early language', he returns to 'Lear' and hears Kent's railing speech, 'Goose, if I had you on Sarum Plain, I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot', he has no doubt about the meaning of the words. 'Sarum Plain, Salisbury Plain; Camelot, Winchester – just twenty miles away. And I felt that with the help of Jack's geese . . . I had arrived at an understanding of something in *King Lear* which . . . commentators had found obscure.'

The language, the literature and the landscape blend into and continue from each other, unbroken, a sense of antiquity about them, answering to Naipaul's own need for continuity, for certainty, for 'a clear historical line'.

Everything in Naipaul's life had been temporary, fractured, uncertain. Just when he thought he was settling down, he had to move on, and rarely of his own volition. His ancestors 'had been transported' from India – they had not migrated, left of their own accord, they 'had been transported', moved on. As a child in Trinidad, Naipaul's family circumstances had moved him around from one 'half-ruined or broken down' house to another, imbuing him with a general air of uncertainty, 'a sense of glory dead'. And even in England he had not come to rest till, twenty years after his first arrival, he arrives in the grounds of this gently decaying estate in Wiltshire.

One thing alone had sustained him through all those fractures and ruptures, one thing alone had given him a sense of continuity: the English language. 'The migration, within the British Empire, from India to Trinidad had given me the English language as my own, and a particular kind of education.'

With that language he could create a world of his own, a world over which he had control, in which he could be secure. And it answered to the world which he had known through the English language, through

his English education – a world full of Salisbury cathedrals and Wiltshire estates and Constables, a world of quiet beauty, peace, stability. ‘Living in the grounds of this shrunken estate, going out for . . . walks . . .’, the ‘nerves’ which had been given him as a child in Trinidad and made him see ‘the possibility, the certainty, of ruin, even at the moment of creation’ were ‘soothed’. And ‘in the wild garden and orchard beside the water meadows, I found a physical beauty perfectly suited to my temperament and answering, besides, every good idea I could have had, as a child in Trinidad, of the physical aspect of England.’

Naipaul is so grateful for the language, the culture, the landscape (first imaginary, learnt from books, and then real) that saved him from ‘the certainty of ruin’ and gave him ‘a clear historical line’ that he does not see that it is that same language, culture, landscape even, that determined his ‘ruin’ in the first place. He is so relieved to be liberated from subjugation that he credits his liberation to the subjugator. In the subjugator’s morality he finds his own disposition: all his characters are colonials. In the subjugator’s conviction he finds his own belief: anyone that tries to overthrow the subjugator instead of becoming like him/her – in Naipaul it is invariably a him – throws himself/herself back into disorder, chaos, ruin.

Nevertheless, Naipaul’s writing is too nuanced to be captured in such monochrome. He may be more than half in love with England, but he is not unreckoning of her slave and colonial past. And yet it is only on a personal level – as it affects him, his perception of himself, his understanding of character, not as it affects the country, the peoples, the society he came from. ‘And that took some understanding, that people like Brenda and Les, who were so passionate, so concerned with their individuality, their style, the quality of their skin and hair, it took some understanding that people who were so proud and flaunting in one way should be prepared in another corner of their hearts or souls or minds to go down several notches and be servants . . . Within that condition (which should have neutered them) all their passions were played out. But that might have been my own special prejudice, my own raw nerves. I came from a colony, once a plantation society, where servitude was a more desperate condition.’

That knowledge of servitude gives him an insight into the different servitude of the Brendas and Les’s, but no understanding of the servitude of his own people who had no less refused to be ‘neutered’ than Brenda and Les had, except that their (the people’s) refusal led to ‘the fraudulence and chaos of revolution’. He sees the desperation of his country’s servitude, but not the desperation of its unending resistance to it. He sees, though, that Brenda and Les and the Phillipases have not succumbed to theirs. He does not understand the condition of slavery, only the feeling of servitude. ‘I came from a colony, a plantation society, where servitude was a more desperate

condition.’ In his writer’s mill, slavery is turned into servitude, the objective condition into subjective feeling, the reality into metaphor. He internalises the slave condition, individualises it, and so anaesthetises it of all social consideration. Hence he writes not of slavery, an exploitative system, of which England is a specific villain, but of servitude, a personal attribute, which, in one measure or another, attaches to all of us. He appears not to have forgotten his native frame of reference (to slavery, colonialism, plantation society) and yet in the process of individualising that history (applying it, that is, to the individual predicament rather than the social condition), internalising it even (for the understanding of oneself), transmuting condition into attribute – for his own peace of mind, his own security, his freedom from uprootedness, but with his writer’s genius – he abandons that history without appearing to abandon it, betrays without seeming to betray. Through that magic alchemy of the writer’s craft, he transmutes a system into an attribute and passes off one for the other as though doing service to both.

Naipaul dreads change, he associates it with disorder, discontinuity. His whole life was that, all colonial life was that. And so he finds solace in cultivating ‘old, possibly ancestral ways of feeling’, Indian ways of feeling, Hindu ways, and holds on to ‘the idea of a world in flux’, in change, a turning world, turning on the axis of creation and destruction: ‘the drum of creation in the god’s right hand, the flame of destruction in his left’, the dance of Shiva, Nataraja, the king of the dance.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards . . .²

Sometimes Naipaul goes beyond Hindu ways of feeling to lapse into Hindu belief. ‘It is as if we all carry in our make-up the effects of accidents that have befallen our ancestors, as if we are in many ways programmed before we are born, our lives half outlined for us’. And once or twice he comes close to seeing his sojourn in Wiltshire as a sort of reincarnation, ‘this gift of the second life . . . , the second, happier childhood . . .’ He trails his Indian-ness along behind him like a comfort.

But solace is not enough, he must have security, if not in changelessness, at least in ‘antiquity’, if not in tranquility, at least in being ‘in tune with’. And the past here in his Constable country was ‘like something one could stretch out and reach, it was like something physically before one, like something one could walk in’. The past here was concrete, tangible, captured and kept. ‘The water meadows had the effect . . . of abolishing the distance between Constable and the present: the painter . . . seemed as near and contemporary as what he made us now see: the water channels and pollarded willows he had

settled down one day to paint.' There was no rupture here between the painter and the landscape, the imagination and the reality, the past and the present.

Even the trees bespoke history, continuity: the yews, the beeches, the ivy, they all had their own historical associations, their literary allusions, their own continuing metaphors. And they were in tune with everything around them. 'The lane . . . was overhung with yew; and summer added the layer-upon-layer shade of beech and copper beech; so that even while I was in that gloom, the openness of the lawn and the soft warm colours of the cottage were visible. I felt delight at the long, low shape of the building set right against the beeches . . . I felt delight at the setting, the naturalness, the rightness.' Yews over-hang, beeches shade over . . . but there is no gloom here except as in chiaroscuro. They belong: the gloom belongs to the openness; the beeches belong with the cottage. Everything is in tune. God is in his heaven . . .

'I was to have something like a second life here . . . those first four days of fog – before I went out walking on the downs – were like a rebirth for me . . . In the most unlikely way, at an advanced age, in a foreign country, I was to find myself in tune with a landscape in a way that I had never been in Trinidad or India (both sources of different kinds of pain).'

And everything about that landscape tells a tale. The date set in stone high on the cottage wall, 1911, reminds Naipaul that it was 'the coronation year of the King-Emperor, George the Fifth'; at Amesbury 'there was an abbey and perhaps also the remnant of the nunnery to which Guinevere came from Winchester-Camelot when the Round Table of King Arthur broke up'; the cows on the downs were the 'lowing herd' of Gray's 'Elegy', 'the sober herd' of the 'Deserted Village' – 'matching' not the poor sickly cows of Trinidad, but 'the idea of the cows' on the labels of condensed milk tins which he had known as a child.

Everything tells a tale of this England, the England that Naipaul imbibed as a colonial child. Here are recognitions, continuities, memories, associations, allusions, endless metaphors, sights and scents – a fullness of life, a belonging and a safety, a life sempiternal, which the sundered, fractured colonial soul can only find, here and now, ready-made and whole in the colonial culture that broke him in the first place. Only by embracing his contradiction can he be complete again, only by accepting the lie of colonialism can he be true.

That which makes the colonial unmakes him, and he remakes himself in the image of that which has unmade him. His sensibilities cry out for location, rebirth, renewal. And he finds them not in contestation against his deracinator but by embracing him and his indelible continuities.

The colonised psyche thinks to find its resolution, its reconciliation to itself, through embracing colonialism again, this time of its own volition, in full knowledge of what it is doing and, having failed to become whole in itself, become whole in the other. But the journey is not quite done, the arrival not quite made. Certainly not the first time out, because that journey takes you back to where you started from, to re-assess it perhaps, to see it with a 'new vision', to understand it, but also, finally, to leave it, reject it even, abjure its uncertainties, its chaos and disorder. And it is only then, when you leave again, that you discover what you must arrive at – though where you arrive at may still only be 'the quayside of arrival'.

In order to arrive at where you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.³

His own enigma of arrival, Naipaul glimpses vividly in Chirico's painting of that name (reproduced on the dust jacket) – or, rather, in the story that he makes of it for himself.

'My story was to be set in classical times, in the Mediterranean. My narrator . . . would arrive – for a reason I had yet to work out – at that classical port with the walls and gateways like cut-outs. He would walk past that muffled figure on the quayside. He would move from that silence and desolation, that blankness, to a gateway or door. He would enter there and be swallowed by the life and noise of a crowded city (I imagined something like an Indian bazaar scene). The mission he had come on – family business, study, religious initiation – would give him encounters and adventures. He would enter interiors, of houses and temples. Gradually there would come to him a feeling that he was getting nowhere; he would lose his sense of mission; he would begin to know only that he was lost. His feeling of adventure would give way to panic. He would want to escape, to get back to the quayside and his ship. But he wouldn't know how . . . At the moment of crisis he would come upon a door, open it, and find himself back on the quayside of arrival. He has been saved; the world is as he remembered it. Only one thing is missing now. Above the cut-out walls and buildings there is no mast, no sail. The antique ship has gone. The traveller has lived out his life'.

The journey is over. There is only the arrival, the second arrival, in Wiltshire, the arrival proper, at a second life, re-incarnation, washed of the sins of the past, the sins of previous births.

Naipaul had left Trinidad for England when he was barely eighteen, on a scholarship to Oxford, to become a writer. And, as behoves a writer-in-waiting, he keeps a diary and observes himself and others,

and himself with others, on that passage to England, with the prejudices of a Brahmin and the longings of a colonial. He is amazed that the white air-hostess 'radiant and beautiful and adult' should call him 'sir' and coddled that she should sharpen his pencil for him. He wonders why he tries to make friends at the airport with a 'Negro' from Trinidad ('not someone I would have sought at home') and offers a banana to an Englishwoman (he had met only one before) seated next to him on the plane – and reckons that those (different) gestures of friendship spring from the same cause of solitariness. On the stop-over in New York he is mortified that he has been cheated by a taxi-driver and has no money left to tip the 'Negro' at the hotel – both humiliations that bite deep.

But as yet these experiences do not enter into his writing, the man and the writer are not yet one, the man is not material to his writing. 'The writer, or the boy travelling to be a writer, was educated; he had had a formal school education . . . But the man . . . was in the profoundest way – as a social being – untutored.' The social world the man knew was a 'half-Indian world . . . removed in time and space from India . . . its language not even half understood, its religion and religious rites not grasped . . . He knew little about his community in Trinidad . . . He had only the prejudices of his time, in that colonial, racially mixed setting.'

As the journey progresses, the man becomes even more separate from the writer, his experiences even more removed from his writings. And race was central to that experience. On the boat taking him from New York to Southampton, Naipaul discovers that the single cabin so generously awarded him by the purser was merely to keep him from being mixed into a white cabin. That he realises this only when a 'Negro' refuses to be segregated with him into a coloured quarter makes Naipaul's humiliation that much keener. On another occasion, a Southerner on the boat confides to him that what coloured people want nowadays is to 'get into your bed and sleep with you', and Naipaul is 'amazed' that someone 'so full of racial feeling' could talk to him like that 'as though he didn't see me racially'.

And yet race was not something he could get himself to write about, 'good familiar material' though it was. 'That was not the kind of personality that the writer wished to assume; that was not the material he dealt in.' It was too close to his 'disturbance', his 'vulnerability', the separation of his two selves. And the concept of the writer given him by his colonial education, as someone 'possessed of sensibility' who 'recorded or displayed an inward development', further estranged the man from the writer.

It is only after he leaves Oxford some five years later, when he begins writing about the street of his childhood in his native Port of Spain, that Naipaul discovers that his subject was not his sensibility,

his inward development, but 'the worlds I contained within myself, the worlds I lived in . . .'

His return to Trinidad the following year, though, leaves him with the feeling that the world he had thought he had left behind had 'shrunk' and he with it. Besides, he could not pursue his calling there: he was still to be published. And so he goes back to England, not to 'the old Victorian grandeur' of Earl's Court as before, but to a 'working class Kilburn house of grey, almost black, brick . . .' In the next four years he 'pulls' much work out of himself and, having produced an 'important book', returns to Trinidad (ten years after he had first left it) with 'the security of a man who had at last made himself what he had wanted to be . . .' But the island cannot hold him. It had been his 'starting point', his 'centre'; it had been the locus of his books. But seeing it now from above, as it were, his fears all done – its landscape had once been a 'landscape of anxiety, even panic, and sacrifice' – his interest in the island was 'satisfied, even sated, in a day'. Its people 'had no news; they revealed themselves quickly. Their racial obsessions, which once could tug at my heart, made them simple people.' Besides, he was a 'traveller-writer' now, commissioned to write on the remaining colonies of the Caribbean and the Guianas, on India, on his own city, Port of Spain. And as 'a colonial travelling among colonials' he found it necessary to 'acknowledge' more of himself, to 'define' himself to himself. Trinidad offered him no continuity, India hung like 'a loose end' in his mind, his past fell away into the 'chasm between the Antilles and India'. But reading the documents of his island, in London, for his book on the Port of Spain, Naipaul is amazed to learn of the 'antiquity' of the place to which he 'belonged'. He had been used to seeing Trinidad from the road, as it were, 'at ground level', an agricultural colony 'at the end of a century-long colonial torpor', but now he could 'attach the island, the little place in the mouth of the Orinoco river to great names and great events: Columbus; the search for El Dorado; Sir Walter Raleigh'. And, in the writing of that history, he feels he has arrived at 'a synthesis of the worlds and cultures' that had made him. And he returns to his new found land – wearying, too, of England and his 'savourless' life there, 'much of it mean', and wanting once and for all to put an end to that first journey some twenty years ago which had 'seeded' all the other journeys and fractured him so – only to find the island 'full of racial tension and close to revolution'. 'The Negroes of Trinidad . . . were asserting their separateness . . . They wore their hair in a new way. The hair that had been with them a source of embarrassment and shame, a servile badge, they now wore as a symbol of aggression.'

The vision of the history he had written was 'not the vision that set the young black people marching in the streets and threatening

another false revolution. The story had not stopped where my book had stopped; the story was going on.' He saw the anger from both sides: 'from the side of the Negroes, the people with the hair, and also from the side of the Asian-Indian community, the people mainly threatened, not black, not white' – but the place was no longer his.

He leaves Trinidad for good and returns to England – to a rented flat in London (where the talk of workmen beneath his window brings him into contact with a side of England he had never known, like 'an unknown country'), to a private house in Gloucester ('a small, mean, common town') and finally to the cottage in the Wiltshire valley.

He has arrived in England proper, historical England, England with its antiquity intact. Trinidad might have antiquity, but it was ruptured by race and threatened by revolution. India had antiquity, even tradition, but for him it was a 'loose end'. The England of London, urban England, was 'savourless' and 'mean'. Only the England of Constable, of manorial houses and decaying estates, had antiquity and tradition and class – and savour. He belonged.

The landscape answered to his temperament, soothed his nerves. It was 'benign', he could 'heal' here, learn about the seasons at last, be re-born. He was in tune.

Even the decay he sees around him he construes into change, and change, which he once grieved over, he could now accept as a constant. 'I lived with the idea of change, of flux, and learned, profoundly, not to grieve for it . . . Decay implied an ideal, a perfection in the past.' The past, at last, could be laid to rest.

He finds common cause, too, with the lord of the manor, his landlord, a recluse like him, and an aristocrat of the sensibilities, a veritable Brahmin, writing poems on Krishna and Shiva. They might have emerged from the opposite sides of Empire, at 'opposite ends of wealth, privilege and in the hearts of different cultures', but, as individuals, they both sought seclusion, solitude, a withdrawal from the world. And Empire is reconciled.*

But there is no real reconciliation, no real 'synthesis', between man and writer; the man and the writer do not come together – despite Naipaul's avowals to the contrary. Or, if they do, it is at the expense of the man, at cost to the man (and therefore to the writer). Because the centrality of the man's experience, the point of separation between man and writer, race, is not dealt with historically. He may accept it as central to his personal experience, but he does not come to terms with the centrality of race in the formation of Trinidadian society and of himself, and indeed of all colonial societies. He may claim that he no longer hides himself from his experience, or his experience from himself, but he hides race from its historical experience and himself

*As I write, Naipaul has been made a knight.

from the historical experience of race. Hence he sees revolution as chaotic and futile when it is the cry of a people against the chaos and futility of their lives – an attempt to make order out of chaos, a new order out of colonial chaos. He sees the historical discontinuities of his country without understanding the political continuities of its resistance to slavery and colonialism. In the colonies there are no historical continuities, only political.

And so he is out of sympathy with the peoples he writes about, his own people, his 'material'. He mocks them, derides them, draws them, cruelly, honestly, from within – with the acuity and brazenness of an unregenerate double-agent – but he does not understand them. Because he cannot understand the racism that structures their societies or the racial history that made them, he cannot find the imagination to become them. But what is a writer if not his imagination? And what is this imagination which does not make of himself the other?

He feels his own humiliations keenly – 'the humiliation the taxi-driver had caused me when he had cheated me; the humiliation I had felt at not being able to tip the Negro in the hotel' – but he cannot understand the humiliation, a whole history of humiliation, associated with the term Negro, whether in recall of himself when young or in his voice today. How could a man, who has a feel for words and feels his own wounds so much, not know his words wound, not feel the wounds of others as his own? How may the wounded wound?

Failing to come to terms with the historical experience of racism, he is diminished as a man. Diminished as a man, he is diminished as a creator. Ultimately there is only his craft, and it is that craft that bridges the gap between man and writer. The synthesis between man and writer, that is, is achieved technically, through the craft of the writer not the creativity of the man. The man is subsumed under the writer. And so the thinking becomes less profound, less truthful, even as the writing gets finer, more truth-like – achieving perhaps a synthesis between man and writer, but not a symbiosis. The writer quarries the man to become a better writer, a man quarries the world to become more human.

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GRAHAM USHER

Employment Training: Britain's new Bantustans

Not so long ago schemes were set up to deal with 'a special class of men'. These men, through unemployment, had become 'demoralised'. They were sent far away from their own communities (they would lose all payments if they refused to go) and were subjected to a form of calculated brutality known as 'labour training'. The schemes were sham from beginning to end, but they served their purpose. Being 'soft', the special class had to be hardened; lacking work, the disciplines of work had to be instilled.

The schemes were known, infelicitously, as labour camps. The Ministry of Labour started them in the early 1930s and their demise corresponded with the economic drive to war production.

Now, once again, 'training', 'demoralisation', 'soft', 'compulsion' are the keywords that accompany an array of government training schemes. And while the 'special class of men' have disappeared with the industries that made them, their contemporary counterparts are hewn from similar rock. Black, female, old, young, migrant, refugee, the de-skilled, the never-skilled, the unemployed, the never-employed – they constitute its richest seams.¹

Employment Training

Employment Training (ET) began life in September 1988. According to the government's own publicity, ET aims to 'provide a broad range

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of training from motivation, rehabilitation and very basic skills to skills needed in high technology industries'.² Whatever the rhetoric, ET is the most comprehensive adult training scheme yet seen in Britain. It makes 600,000 training places available to the unemployed. Its programmes last between six and twelve months, 'depending on each trainee's needs'. When on the programme, trainees spend 40 per cent of their time doing 'directed training', which consists of off-the-job training and basic skills; the rest of the time goes on placements, where trainees get 'work experience'. While on the schemes, trainees receive the most basic level of state welfare benefit plus £10 extra allowance for 'expenses'. ET's particular targets are the long-term unemployed – defined by the government as 'anyone between 18 and 59 who has been out of work for longer than six months' – and those social groups comprising 'special needs'. In practice, ET schemes have been concentrated in the inner cities and the de-industrialised regions of the north, Wales and Scotland. The special social groups are single unemployed women, bilingual adults and those adults whose long-term unemployment has made them 'unprepared' for the labour market.

ET is the latest in a long line of training schemes that have originated from the Training Commission, the governmental agency responsible for vocational training. The Training Commission is better known in its earlier incarnation as the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). Since the 1979 Conservative election victory, the MSC has not only formulated policy on training; it has taken an increasingly active role in its control and delivery. It has presided over the abolition of the Industrial Training Boards and, with them, the demise of the 'corporate consensus' between governments, employers and trade unions that had been the signature of post-war training policy. It has largely replaced the traditional apprenticeship systems with the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), which now effectively controls the entry to the labour market for all 16- and 17-year-olds.³ During the last five years, the MSC has increasingly moved into the area of adult training. By 1987, it ran thirty-seven separate adult training schemes, including the Community Programme – a 'make-work' programme, offering some 225,000 places, where participants received the rate for the job (an average of £60 per week) in exchange for working on community projects. It is these adult training schemes that ET now supersedes.

The opposition to ET has been loud but ineffectual. At its 1988 annual conference, the Trades Union Congress advised its affiliates to withdraw all cooperation with the programme on the grounds that ET opened the door to Workfare – the US system where the unemployed are compelled to do community jobs as a condition of receiving benefit. It was apparently in response to this decision that the then

employment secretary, Norman Fowler, scrapped the Training Commission. But, in reality, the tripartite (government-employer-union) approach embodied by the Training Commission/MSc was an anachronism the government could now do without. Since then, via the Training Agency (TA), which replaces the Training Commission, both the YTS and ET have been under direct rule from Westminster. For the government, the labour market had finally been cleared of its 'corporatist accretions'.

ET has now been in operation for well over a year. It has had a difficult start. The Training Agency has been forced drastically to revise downwards its projected number of training places, from 312,000 in the first six months to 185,000, due to a low take-up. Employers are increasingly reluctant to participate in the scheme by offering work experience due to the 'low quality of its training'. And the unemployed – whose resistance, so long as the scheme remains voluntary, is confined to refusal – have been turning down places at a rate of 70 per cent in the inner cities.⁴ Their hunches are right. In the first national survey to assess the success of the scheme, it was found that of those passing through the programme, only one in every 200 obtained work.⁵

But the above analysis is superficial. For ET was never about training, still less about finding work. This becomes apparent when we look at the legislative ropes and pulleys that helped haul the scheme into place. There are two main pieces of legislation to look at here: the 1989 Employment and Social Security Acts.

According to the government, the purpose of the Employment Act is to 'iron out the rigidities that block the free movement of the market'.⁶ In reality, the law, which is the latest in a series of anti-trade union measures passed under Thatcher, removes the last vestiges of legal protection afforded to young workers, including the young trainee. Today, 17-19-year-olds can be used to work shifts, nights, more than eleven hours a day and more than fifty-four hours a week. They become a pool of cheap, flexible labour. The social security legislation acts as a tributary to this pool. For youths, it removes state income support if they refuse a place on the YTS. For adults (19+), it demands not only that they are available for work, but that they are 'actively seeking work'. This little phrase has a precise legal meaning. To actively seek work you must apply for training schemes (ET) which the secretary of state 'considers will improve your employment prospects'; you must produce evidence of regular applications for jobs, and you must be prepared to accept any job regardless of your previous experience, pay or qualifications.⁷ In addition to this, the Social Security Act institutes measures that massively increase the state's surveillance of the unemployed. The Re-Start interview, a compulsory Department of Social Security (DSS) interview for all

claimants who have been out of work for an 'extended' period of time, is now to occur once every three rather than once every six months. There will be state subsidies for employers who check trainees' attendance on 'work-trials'.⁸ And there will be an extra 1,000 social security investigators whose brief is to flush out 'fraudulent-type' persons from 'fraudulent-prone' communities.

Taken together, the new laws anchor the unemployed to the market. On the one hand, they produce the necessary labour conditions for a lumpen, low-wage economy; on the other, they mount a regime of statutory control over the unemployed who can be policed virtually unhindered.

The government's strategy is a dual one of market de-regulation and state control. Yet, under Thatcherism, even social control fragments into the private. The end result of ET is the privatisation of training. How do we know? Because the government tells us in its White Paper 'Employment for the 1990s'.

From 1990, 'the ownership of training and the enterprise system will be placed with the employers'. By 'training', the White Paper means YTS and ET. By 'employers', it means Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). These new bodies will have nine to fifteen members, two-thirds of whom must be drawn from the private sector, including 'top level executives, owners or business leaders who have substantial management or policy responsibilities'.⁹ The government wants 100 TECs established in the next three years as part of its market-led approach to the economy. As Margaret Thatcher said to invited business audiences: 'The Government is handing training over to you.'¹⁰

'Hand it over' is an apt phrase. For TECs not only have a built-in employer majority, but trade unions will have no statutory role in them, not even presence – they are to be removed from the ambit of training altogether. TEC members are to model themselves on 'company directors', self appointed and self monitoring, subject neither to community pressure nor to local authority policy (such as equal opportunities), nor even national inspectorates (like health and safety). TECs are free, in thrall only to capital. For the TECs' stock in trade is labour – cheap, flexible and mobile – under the guise of training. But, to maintain this veneer, TECs, at least initially, must use the further education (FE) system.

The new FE: a partner in containment

TECs are already in a strong position to become the dominant partners in their relations with FE. The Training Agency, via the schemes initiated by the MSC, now controls 25 per cent of all non-advanced further education (i.e. all courses and programmes in

colleges below degree level). Of the 132,000 unemployed students in FE, the Training Agency funds over 100,000 of them and employs 3,500 full-time and 4,000 part-time staff.¹¹ In certain areas of the country (e.g. Clydeside), the Training Agency is the largest educational employer; in many areas of the country, whole sectors of the post-16 education service (e.g., adult education) would not exist without its dispensation.¹² This empire will now pass into the hands of the TECs. For the last decade, FE has thus become progressively in hock to a government agency with which FE workers cannot bargain and over which they exert no control.

(a) *Access*

For the unemployed student, access to further education is bound up with the 21-hour rule. This stated that such students could study up to 21 hours a week without forfeiting their right to state benefits. The new social security law effectively abrogates this right. The new DSS guidelines state that you cannot be 'actively seeking work' and studying. Already, many unemployed students are being hassled to drop genuine educational courses in favour of 'approved' training schemes like ET.¹³ In the new Re-Start interviews, such educational choices are explicitly excluded as a 'legitimate' route out of unemployment.¹⁴ If the government has not yet got round to making ET compulsory, it is largely because the abolition of the 21-hour rule removes any urgent need to do so.

(b) *Curriculum*

This denial of education becomes transparent when we look at the content of the new ET curriculum. Here, the 'directed training' part of the scheme reveals itself as a narrow vocationalism. For thirty hours a week trainees are given 'job search skills', 'job counselling', 'life skills', 'vocational English'. If the names differ, the purpose is the same. Trainees are 'taught' to be punctual, smart, obedient, realistic, motivated – good little wage slaves, in fact. The pedagogy underlying the curriculum – dressed in a 'progressive' jargon – is, in practice, a variant of behaviour modification. We offer 'interview techniques' that practise answering questions, but not questioning; 'work simulations' that give instruction, but not discussion; 'form-filling' exercises that want knowledge incorporation, but not reflection. Here, education is not about the all-round development of an individual, but is a conditioning of those qualities deemed desirable by the market. For the trainee, it involves a behavioural adjustment which accepts whatever work, under whatever conditions, for whatever pay. For the teacher, it entails that we become front-line agents of social control.

(c) Surveillance

This changed role of the ET teacher is perhaps the most disturbing development thrown up by the Training Agency's increasing control of FE. It is certainly the one most threatening to our black students. With ET, teachers become less catalysts of cultural change, but rather communicating vessels for those agencies of state which police and punish people. We are encouraged to 'liaise' with the DSS to report on a particular trainee's 'progression'. Our Heads get on our backs about attendance patterns. We are asked to 'inform' on regular non-attenders to our lessons. If a trainee doesn't appear, his or her benefit will be docked correspondingly. Insidiously, the teacher is drawn into a multi-agency approach to education, a kind of educational neighbourhood watch that involves civil servants, DSS officers, employers, the police, the Home Office – everyone, in fact, except the trainees.¹⁵ They, in this endless regimentation, are passive; but they watch us. And they see in the teacher – or trainer or supervisor – another brick in the wall of restriction, conditioning and surveillance that overshadows them. For limitation, control, surveillance are what 'education', for them, has become.

These are the immediate effects of ET and the legislation that surrounds it. But these changes in education and training cast long shadows. The tremors set in motion by the establishment of ET conjure up a future both old and new. Old, because in its pursuit of profit ET articulates capital's perennial themes of alienation and exploitation. New, because its effects will have as their site the post-industrial society, built on the microchip, and as their subjects a different working class. If, as Sivanandan says, the circuits of imperialism are changing,¹⁶ then ET is simply a tiny filament in these circuits. But a filament reflects. If looked at correctly, it will reveal the whole.

Training in the technological age

The material conditions for the emergence of ET are the political ascendancy of capital over labour and the rapid economic development from an industrial to a technological base. But whenever we talk of the microchip revolution, we must be wary of those anti-economism theorists who see, in the transformation of capital's productive mode, only the disappearance of class.¹⁷ For the de-construction of industrial capitalism presumes the recomposition and relocation of the working class. And capital's primary social project in the coming period will be to recompose and relocate the working class on its terms, so that any gains made by it during capital's earlier period of external expansion can be unmade, any concessions yielded to it through internal compromise snatched back. While it is true that the imperative driving

capital's project to its post-industrial stage is (in the last instance) economic, the form of this project – the eventual settlement between the classes once the tremors of the chip come finally to rest – is political and ideological. A few examples, drawn from education and training, will demonstrate this.

(a) *Flexibility and employability*

The keyword of the new monetarist order is flexibility. Political commentators are unsure of its content: they toss it back and forth, like an old ball at cricket, to see if it will swing.¹⁸ For capital, flexibility means the ability to adjust quickly and cheaply to a more volatile, uncertain and competitive market. For the working class, flexibility is short-hand for de-regulation, pay-cutting and the dismantling of protective legislation. For the ET trainee, flexibility – in ET speak – is called employability.

The one common theme that runs through the protean nature of government training schemes is that somehow the unemployed are to blame for their own unemployment. The Training Agency locates the causes of de-industrialisation not in the ravages of Thatcherism, but in the 'tangled pathologies' of an underclass whose socialisation in some way deprives them of the ability to work. This is seen in the 'student-centred' pedagogy of the ET curriculum. Not only are we teachers, we are also encouraged to become counsellors. We must gather the unemployed together to help them make up their 'deficit'; we must give them the right 'interpersonal skills', restore and rehabilitate them, so that they are 'ready to tackle the shortage of skills to match the available jobs'.¹⁹ This, it hardly needs to be said, is so much bullshit. The real purpose of employability is to make people accept jobs that ordinarily they would not accept for pay that employed workers have already refused. To adapt the ET advertising slogan: it forces the workers without jobs to do the jobs without wages.

With technological change, the gravitational pull of an economy shifts from its industrial to service sectors. But the growth in this sector is almost wholly in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations – shop and office work, clerical and personal services, selling and distribution, cleaning, security and retail.²⁰ These, indeed, are the Training Agency's targeted 'small and medium sized employers in the private sector'.²¹ Yet, by definition, unskilled work does not require training. By the same token, a trainee should not be laid off if she happens to slow down production.²² But, of course, she will be laid off if she is one of thousands of subsidised trainees being used to replace paid employees. For to demand 'practical training' rather than work rate is to bite into the surplus value that got her the 'work experience' in the first place. And since ET trainees cost the employer nothing, this

surplus value, this exploitation, is absolute. It is also coerced exploitation. For the trainees do not have wages to keep them in line, but the threatened removal of their state benefits – that is, of the only source of income that remains left to them. If the silicon age has an underclass, then publicly subsidised trainees are it.

(b) *Training as sub-contracting*

In Wallraff's *Lowest of the Low*, there is a person called Adler.²³ He is the sub-contractor who hires out migrant labour (personified in the book by Wallraff/Ali) to contractors who, in turn, take on the shit work of reputable firms that wish to stay reputable. ET has its Adlers. They are the increasing number of private training agencies who take on trainees for 'directed training' and then hawk them out to companies for 'work experience'. For the private training agencies' role is identical to Adler's; and the trainee's economic role is that of the *gastarbeiter*. As Adler uses Ali, the agencies use trainees as units of labour. And the trainee's prime asset, like that of the migrant worker, is that he or she lets capital take on labour without taking on the legal hassles of labour – for publicly subsidised trainees, by definition, belong to the public. And since these workers are not employed, but trained (and so, legally, not employees, but trainees), the law does not know them and cannot protect them. The trainee, like Ali, slips its net. What in ET-speak is 'work experience' is in reality sub-contracting. ET is the conduit that allows capital to have the work it wants – free, temporary, illicit – without covenant for the workers – young, black, female, foreign – it does not want.

The new corporatism

I have said that capital's central social project in its post-industrial stage is to recompose the working class on its terms. I have tried to show, through examples of education and training, how it is setting in place mechanisms to realise this shift in the balance of class forces. But a class is never just composed, never just made; through its resistance, it helps to make itself. For the class thrown up by capital's restructuring is not merely reconstituted, but new. And the modes of its organisation, the sites of its struggle, the communities of its resistance, alike, are new. Though some of the Left mistake recomposition for disappearance, the class is there, and only a Left blinkered by ethnocentrism and dogma could fail to see it. It remains, too, the central agency in the struggle for socialism.

We know the working class is changing. From being manufacture-based, permanent, dominantly male and skilled, it has become service-based, temporary, dominantly female and de-skilled. The material bases for these new divisions of labour are changes wrought in production by the microchip. So, today, capital wants a functionally

flexible core of workers that can respond to changes in technology, and a numerically flexible periphery of workers that can be adjusted to changes in the market. In this reorganisation, the publicly subsidised trainee slides into the periphery like a disk into a drive. The rise of the trainee as a new type of worker – temporary, interchangeable, de-skilled – is organically linked to the emergence of economies predicated on the microchip, the semi-conductor and robotics. To that extent, she becomes the typical worker of the future. For, in the new technological revolution, we find that the classical, industrially based working class will become ever more fractured into those, the core, who programme the economy; and those, the mass, who service it.

But if the construction of the new technological base is to be market-led, the contours of the workforce, and the divisions of power within it, are to be corporately planned. To put it another way: it is because capital wants labour to flow in the unbridled waters of the market that the state creates a new superstructure of public and private agencies to dredge the people of their resistance. ET represents this new corporatism in its early stage. It intends both the de-regulation and the incorporation of labour, both horizontal (market) and vertical (politico-legal) segregation of the class. In the new monetarism we have a workforce, in the form of trainees, which is at once free and subsidised; a market-led economy where prices float but where income is legally divorced from the powers of bargaining; a labour force without labour power; an economics brutally extracted from politics. In a word: we have a system where capital is free and labour is in chains. Under capital's dominion new technology entails not a liberation from work, but an ever greater, state-induced exploitation of workers. And for the periphery (i.e., the new mass working class), the state's political expression will be neither liberal democratic nor social democratic; but corporatist, and controlling.

In the post-industrial economy exclusion will be the periphery's fate. For, as always, one of the prime instruments capital has to enforce its demarcation between the employed and never-employed, haves and have-nots, core and periphery, is racism. The state is aware of the usefulness of this historic division and acts on it. Behind the Training Agency's rhetoric about the need for TECs 'to develop and improve services for disadvantaged groups . . . because . . . unemployment among minority ethnic groups is a serious problem which ET must tackle'²⁴ lie various measures that are specifically designed to catch the black fraction of the working class. For example, via its redefinition of the educational category of 'special needs', ET attracts the Asian communities whose 'native tongue is not English and who have language difficulties which put them at a significant disadvantage in the labour market'^{*,25} through its regulation of benefit payments, it

* In an environment where adult education provision is being cut back, TA adult 'English' classes are increasingly the only ones on offer.

foils refugees and asylum-seekers who, to sustain their allowances at 'indigenous' levels, must accept ET whether they need it or not;²⁶ and, in its role as patrol and cop, it defines those blacks interned in the inner cities as so 'special' that ET's qualifying period of six months will, for them, be waived to three.²⁷ Like YTS, then, ET is to have racism inscribed into its very structures.²⁸ For the process which, legally, makes trainees neither students nor workers is the same process, which ideologically and economically, removes them from the labour movement's purview, makes them other, excludes them lest they infect the whole class with their nascent rebellion. They are the new underclass of the silicon age – an underclass not thrown up by the exigencies of the market alone, but rather one produced, regulated and sanctioned by the state.

An underclass performs two roles. It provides a cheap and flexible source of unskilled labour during a period of rapid technological change, and it sows economic and political divisions within the working class.²⁹ But during de-industrialisation, the underclass also acts as a buffer, absorbing the worst impact of the re-structuring and cushioning 'higher strata' against its effects. Historically, these roles were performed by migrant and immigrant labour. The problem for capital is how to pass on the roles to their second and third generations, how to keep the underclass as underclass, how to make the periphery enduringly peripheral. While the prime mover in this forced inheritance will, again, be racism, the vehicle, will, dominantly, be the education system. For in all the Training Agency's talk of 'skill shortages' and 'equal opportunity', one obvious point must be borne in mind: that capital has a permanent interest in sustaining the catastrophic underachievement in education that is the lot of the black underclass, in particular, and of the working class, in general. When the jobs out there are arduous, unskilled, dirty, dangerous, temporary, ad hoc, casual (and, in a peripheral labour market, they will be), then the children – from an ever earlier age – must be conditioned to meet those needs.³⁰ When the order of the day is 'to cohere capital for a new lease of life'³¹ then the working class must be rendered fragmented, divided and weak. The black community has bitter experience of the role education plays in this rendering, of how there is no success like failure. For the history of their presence in Britain is a history of the struggle for educational rights. From assimilation to ESN, from disruptive units to multiculturalism, their struggle has essentially been that of the class – against an education denied, remedial, compensatory and coercive; and for an education grounded on knowledge, understanding and justice.

ET is the latest mutation in this history of containment – and it is more. For the trawl of economic, social and legal measures it brings in its train exemplifies all that previous history. At a single stroke, it

removes civil rights, restricts entry to employment, denies access to education and – in the distorting mirrors of race and ethnicity – pits class against class. Through the detours of de-education and de-skilling, it also returns the class struggle to the economic. Only now the combatants are not the classic players of worker and employer, but rather those of the state and the workless – and the issues to be fought will not only be those of wages and conditions, but equally those of rights, of education and of the quality of work.

In the silicon age, education and training will become ever less ‘professional’ concerns. The middle class has the choice to ‘opt in’ or ‘opt out’ to private schools and city technology colleges for its ‘core’ offspring. Education and training will become less an issue for political parties – for vocationalism has cross-party support and there are few votes to be got from ‘sink’ schools. Rather, the issues of education and training will be found amidst the sweatshops and sub-contractors of the inner cities and de-industrialised regions to be picked up, fought over and incarnated by their denizens. Black, female, poor white, youth, old, migrant, refugee and trainee – and a class by virtue of their common dispossession.

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Notes and documents

US: the revocation of civil rights

In the United States today we are witnessing a reversal of many of the legal and political reforms stimulated by the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. This repeal of what may be termed the Second Reconstruction is proceeding in much the same manner as the reversal, a hundred years ago, of the First Reconstruction reforms that followed the American Civil War. In both cases, the executive and judicial branches of the federal government worked together in an increasingly racist, popular and intellectual culture to turn the clock back. In the last decades of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, black rights to equality in the economy were abrogated – as were their rights to be considered as ‘real Americans’. In both cases, the ‘counter-revolution’ followed an incompletely conceptualised and implemented ‘revolution’ in which the economic basis of freedom was neglected by the political leadership of the African-American community and denied by the corporate political and economic elites.

First Reconstruction

In the case of the First Reconstruction, it was the denial of land to the freewomen and freemen which undermined their ability to protect their limited political rights. Radical Republican Congressman Thaddeus Stephens posed the challenge facing the victorious Union following the Civil War in stark and prophetic terms, when he stated that political democracy was impossible in a situation in which the majority were landless and most of the land was owned by a tiny group of ‘nabobs’. So powerful was his insight that northern industrialists and their political representatives, the Republican Party, refused to confiscate the land and distribute it – ‘40 acres and a mule’ – to the former slaves or to make it available at low prices with low rates of interest to poor whites. For, if political democracy in the South required a Jeffersonian economic democracy, would not political

democracy in the industrialising North require a form of economic democracy as well?

What the industrialists and their allies wanted from the South was cheap cotton and that would be best produced by a re-established plantation economy. They also needed to keep control of the federal government to further their own economic and political interests. And, since only the enfranchisement of the former slaves would ensure the political dominance of the industrialists' party, the Republicans, in the immediate future, that also was key to the Reconstruction reforms.

Of these two aims, the re-established plantation system producing cheap cotton for export and for domestic mills remained inviolate until the First World War. The second goal was a more temporary one, for, as time went on, the black vote became less and less necessary to maintaining the new national political economy and the cost of protecting it became too high. Consequently, the political rights that had been extended to black men were swiftly eroded – by terrorism; lack of military protection for blacks in the South; the withdrawal of federal commitment to black rights as the price for Hayes' victory in the 1876 presidential election, and by a series of Supreme Court decisions. The latter overturned Reconstruction laws designed to protect the rights of the former slaves and overwhelmingly interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed equal protection before the law, in such a way as, in fact, to deny it to black Americans – while at the same time providing protection for corporations against state regulation.*

The Supreme Court began the process of neutralising the gains blacks had made with the *Slaughterhouse Cases* of 1873. The Court argued that the adoption of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the constitution – which formed the legal basis of Reconstruction – was not intended 'to destroy the main features of the general system' which gave the individual states primacy over their own affairs, including civil rights, 'and over the definition of the basic terms of citizenship within its boundaries'.² In 1876 the Court limited the rights of African Americans further in the case of *United States v Cruikshank* which

established the principle that the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees the rights of citizens only against encroachments by the states, and not against . . . private individuals. In addition, it held that the violation by a private person of the civil rights of another could

*One of the authors of the Fourteenth Amendment, Representative John A. Bingham, was 'later to admit that he had phrased it "word for word and syllable for syllable" to protect the rights of private property and corporations'.¹

only be a crime when it interfered with an act connected with national citizenship.³

In the *Civil Rights Cases*, decided in 1883, the Court overturned the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which had implemented the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments by outlawing discrimination in places of public resort and transport facilities. This decision is crucial, not only because of the practical consequences following the repeal of the Act, but also because of the Court's rejection of the notion of 'special treatment':

When a man has emerged from slavery . . . there must be some stage in the progress of his elevation when he takes the rank of a mere citizen, and ceases to be the special favorite of the laws, and when his rights . . . are to be protected in the ordinary modes by which other men's rights are protected. There were thousands of free colored people in this country before the abolition of slavery . . . yet no one, at that time, thought it was any invasion of his personal status as a freeman because he was not admitted to all the privileges enjoyed by white citizens, or because he was subjected to discriminations . . .⁴

The Court had effectively equated the protection of equal rights for black Americans with 'special treatment' – thus placing them outside the category of American in the same way in which race-based chattel slavery served to exclude black from the Declaration of Independence's definition of men in its assertion that 'all men are created equal'.

The final stage in the legal process of creating an apartheid society in the South was reached in 1896 in the *Plessy v Ferguson* decision. In this case the Court upheld a Louisiana statute establishing segregation of whites and blacks on railroad trains and held that the Fourteenth Amendment, 'in the nature of things . . . could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality'.⁵ Justice Harlan challenged the Court's majority decision in a vigorous and famous dissent, arguing that:

The present decision . . . will not only stimulate aggressions . . . upon the admitted rights of colored citizens, but will encourage the belief that it is possible, by means of state enactments, to defeat the beneficent purposes [of] the recent amendments of the Constitution, by one of which the blacks of this country were made citizens . . . whose privileges and immunities, as citizens, the States are forbidden to abridge.⁶

This undermining of the First Reconstruction, with its consequent

denial to African Americans of their political and economic rights, and the locking of most into debt peonage as tenant farmers in the South, followed on from the actions of the leaders of the former slaves as well as those of the white power structure. The black petty-bourgeois leaders were committed to the capitalist political economy and thus failed to challenge its logic or to articulate the social class interests of the black majority. As Frederick Douglass said in 1880:

Could the nation have been induced to listen to those stalwart Republicans, Thaddeus Stephens and Charles Sumner [who had favoured the confiscation of Confederate estates], some of the evils we now suffer would have been averted. The negro would not today be on his knees . . . supplicating the master class to give him leave to toil . . . He would not now be swindled out of his hard earnings . . . because left by our emancipation measures at the mercy of the men who had robbed him all his life and his people for centuries.⁷

Indeed, this failure had even more deleterious consequences: it helped legitimate the repeal itself. Demands for justice and material compensation for blacks were transmuted into demands for ‘special treatment’ – clearly unacceptable in a society in which every individual was in competition with every other individual. Failing to challenge this stereotype, black leaders could not make the entirely valid case for group rights for those who had been enslaved for two centuries and then freed without compensation.

Second Reconstruction

Some hundred years later, a parallel process could be seen working to overturn the gains of the so-called ‘Second Reconstruction’ – brought about by the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. These gains were limited but real. The burden of Jim Crow was removed from the backs of black people in the South, and spin-off from the movement led to new types of political mobilisation in the cities of the North. But the class differences in the black community, the commitment to the capitalist economy by the black leadership and the incorporation of large sections of the black middle class into various levels of the state bureaucracy continued the isolation of the mass of black people and their needs from the political agenda.

Nonetheless, a liberal national agenda, combined with the changing economic and political situation in the South, facilitated a series of concessions which, fundamentally, overturned petty apartheid, de jure segregation, and provided for the incorporation of blacks into an existing, structurally unequal, political system on a (more or less) colour blind basis. The civil rights movement also acted as a catalyst for women, young people and other racially-identified groups whose

movements in the 1960s challenged a whole gamut of assumptions about what had been accepted as 'natural' in American society – for example, definitions of sexuality, the nature of the family, the truthfulness and significance of media representations, as well as institutional discrimination against blacks.

The Supreme Court, under Chief Justice Earl Warren, responded with a range of decisions which extended rights to groups in addition to blacks and in areas beyond the removal of de jure segregation. For example, establishing the right to counsel in *Gideon v Wainwright* (1963); the right to remain silent in the face of police custodial interrogation in *Miranda v Arizona* (1966); the right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures in *Terry v Ohio* (1968); the right to exclude illegally obtained evidence from trial in *Mapp v Ohio* (1961). The liberal majority on the bench remained even after President Nixon appointed Warren Burger as Chief Justice, and the extension of rights continued in *Roe v Wade* (1973), which legalised abortion, and in cases involving blacks, such as *Riggs v Duke Power Co.* (1971) in which the Court unanimously placed the burden of proof in 'disparate impact' cases on the employer.*

The *Duke Power* case upheld affirmative action, which was one of the major concessions wrested from the system by the spreading of black struggle to the urban ghettos and by the urban uprisings of the 1960s. Another set of concessions involved the relaxation of some of the procedural barriers which had prevented many of those eligible for social benefits from obtaining them and the establishment of job training and creation programmes. These programmes did not, of course, address the fundamental inequalities of the society. Nor did they guarantee jobs. But they did provide an increased range of benefits to poor people.

Severely limited in terms of the continued structural inequalities though such reforms were, they were, nonetheless, vigorously opposed by those individuals and groups that came to be known as the New Right. Even symbolic measures of limited substance, designed to relegitimize the system, triggered visceral rage as the overthrow of the established order. This was seen, for example, in the New Right's defence of the patriarchal, nuclear family as the 'norm' and in its attempts to blame poverty, welfare dependency and other social problems on the supposed 'breakdown' of family values under the influence of the change-oriented movements.

Most importantly, whites were seen as threatened by black demands for equality in the labour market, in education and in other

*Where it could be shown that a set of employment practices had a differential impact on whites and blacks, the burden was on the employer to prove that these practices were justified on non-racial grounds.

public spheres. The New Right built on Nixon's 'Southern Strategy', which set out to recruit white votes from the Democrats on the basis that they had become the party of blacks, 'women's libbers' and homosexuals, whereas the Republicans were a 'white man's party'. Nixon used the code-words 'law and order' to appeal to the white South and to white working-class voters in the rest of the country. And, once elected, he appointed as a special advisor Daniel Moynihan, author of the infamous Moynihan Report of 1965, which argued that the 'pathological' black family was responsible for the poverty of blacks. Moynihan justified Nixon's confidence when he advocated a policy of 'benign neglect' towards the issue of race and argued, in effect, for the political isolation of the black underclass:

The Negro lower class must be dissolved . . . It is the existence of this lower class, with its high rates of crime, dependency and general disorderliness, that causes nearby whites . . . to fear Negroes and to seek by various ways to avoid and constrain them. It is this group that black extremists use to threaten white society with the prospect of mass arson and pillage. It is also this group that terrorises and plunders the stable elements of the Negro community . . . forced to live cheek and jowl with a murderous slum population.⁸

The repeal of the Second Reconstruction

Nixon set in train a process of changing the composition of the Supreme Court and other federal benches in order to get judicial repeal of large parts of the Second Reconstruction, a process that was continued under President Reagan and now Bush. All three Presidents have used racism – and antagonism towards the gains made by women and gays – as central planks in their social agenda, which, in turn, has diverted attention from their economic goals.

These had basically to do with the necessity, given the decline in America's economic dominance, of rolling back a variety of concessions granted in the post-war period to a stratum of the working class – largely white, male, unionised and employed in the primary labour market. These concessions included relative job security, recognition of collective bargaining rights, pay levels linked to increases in inflation and company contributions to pensions and health care insurance. This augmented social wage bought for capital a disciplined work force, cooperative trade unions and political support for the Cold War and the permanent war-time economy. But loss of markets to the Japanese and Germans and higher labour costs than its international competitors eventually pushed American capital to seek a reconstruction of this Keynesian accommodation with labour. Capital required repeal of the high social wage and an increase in

workers' output through speed-up, increasing the intensity of work and lessening, if not removing altogether, health and safety protection.

This economic strategy required a political framework, in which the attack on affirmative action was to play a central part. It scapegoated blacks and women as responsible for the deteriorating position of the white, male working class. One measure of the price now being paid by the working class is that the average American family income, in real terms, is lower than it was in 1973, and it takes the paid labour of more family members to earn that income. The reorganisation of the economy has meant the replacement of higher paid working-class jobs with low-paid, non-unionised, temporary or part-time jobs. Two million Americans were poor in 1986 even though they worked full-time and year-round, and there were another 6.9 million people working part-time or part of the year and earning less than the poverty level. At the same time, job-training and job-subsidisation programmes, among the benefits of the governmental response to black militancy in the 1960s, were cut by nearly 70 per cent. Spending on welfare also dropped and the real income of welfare recipients has fallen nationally by approximately one-third.⁹

The Reagan administration mounted a consistent attack on the enforcement of civil rights legislation, staffed enforcement agencies with opponents of the legislation and consistently encouraged legal challenges to past civil rights gains. Reagan's appointees to the Supreme Court were uniformly opponents of the rights of blacks, women and the working class. Reagan also appointed half of the lower federal judiciary in his eight years in office. Frank Deale, legal director of the Center for Constitutional Rights, sees this combination as particularly dangerous because lower court judges are now free to innovate in pursuit of their ideological goals with little fear that the Supreme Court will overturn their decisions.¹⁰

The Supreme Court's assault on black rights

The Supreme Court, with its Reagan appointees now giving it a reactionary majority, made a series of decisions in 1989 which set back significantly, if not repealed, the previous Court's decisions and legislative measures of the Second Reconstruction. In January 1989, in the case of *Richmond v Croson*, the Court overturned the 1980 *Fullilove v Klutznick* case when it declared unconstitutional a requirement in Richmond, Virginia, that construction firms must subcontract at least 30 per cent of their city contracts to minority-owned businesses. Despite the fact that prior to this requirement less than 1 per cent of contracts were awarded to minority-owned businesses in a city which is half black, the Court's decision, written by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, held that: 'The 30 per cent quota cannot in any

realistic sense be tied to any injury suffered by anyone . . . Racial classifications are suspect, and that means that simple legislative assurances of good intention cannot suffice.’ Justice Thurgood Marshall, in a strongly-worded dissent (echoing Justice Harlan in 1896), said the decision marked a full-scale retreat from the commitment to equality of economic opportunity. He argued that:

In concluding that remedial classifications warrant no different standard of review . . . than the most brute and repugnant forms of state-sponsored racism, a majority of this Court signals that it regards racial discrimination as largely a phenomenon of the past, and that government bodies need no longer preoccupy themselves with rectifying racial injustice.¹¹

In *Wards Cove Packing Co. v Atonio*, the Court overturned the 1971 *Duke Power* decision, in which the Court unanimously placed the burden of proving that an employment practice is ‘related to job performance’ on the employer whose practice was being challenged. This decision had created the category of ‘disparate-impact’ cases that relied on statistical evidence to force employers to defend practices that had the effect of discriminating against blacks or women. In *Wards Cove*, the Court shifted that burden to employees, who must now prove that the challenged practices are not, in fact, necessary and employers need only show that what they did was a ‘reasonable employment practice.’ Justice Harry Blackmun, in a dissenting opinion, wrote: ‘One wonders whether the majority still believes that race discrimination – or, more accurately, race discrimination against non-whites – is a problem in our society, or even remembers that it ever was.’¹²

In *Martin v Wilks*, the Court overturned the 1979 *United Steelworkers v Weber* decision in which the Court held that an affirmative action plan agreed in labour negotiations did not violate whites’ civil rights. In *Martin*, the Court ruled that white firefighters in Birmingham, Alabama, could sue to reopen an affirmative-action settlement, approved eight years earlier to remedy discrimination that had kept blacks out of all senior positions in the department. The Court held that a voluntary settlement in the form of a consent decree between one group of employees and their employer cannot possibly ‘settle’ the conflicting claims of employees who do not join in the agreement. It was felt by critics of the decision that this would lead to the reopening of many cases long closed.

In *Patterson v McLean Credit Union*, the Court ruled that the Civil Rights Act of 1866 applied only to discrimination in hiring but not to discriminatory treatment on the job. A week later, on 22 June 1989, the Court, after suggesting this line of argument to the plaintiff, ruled again by a 5-4 majority in *Jett v Dallas Independent School District* that

the Civil Rights Act of 1866 cannot be used to bring damage suits against state or local governments for acts of racial discrimination. Under the ruling, plaintiffs can succeed only if they can show that the discrimination was not the random act of an individual public employee but resulted from an official 'policy or custom'. Justice Brennan, speaking for the minority, termed the ruling 'astonishing', adding that, 'Before today, no one had questioned that a person could sue a governmental official for damages due to a violation' of the 1866 law. By deciding as it did, the Court removed the benefits following use of that law, the obtaining of damages, and will force victims of discrimination in the future to use other legislation which does not provide for damages.¹³ In the period between 15 June 1989 – when the *Patterson* decision was handed down – and 1 November, there were ninety-six bias claims dismissed in federal courts without any substantive rulings on the claims themselves.¹⁴

In another decision, which, while ostensibly having nothing to do with race relations, will have disproportionate consequences racially because of a justice system which criminalises blacks and Latinos, the Court ruled in *Murray v Giarrantano* that indigent inmates on death row do not have a constitutional right to a lawyer to assist them in a second round of state court appeals. This has major implications because in capital cases these proceedings result in the death sentences being set aside in as many as two-thirds of all cases. In states which do not provide lawyers for such appeals, the supply of volunteer lawyers is drying up because of the costs in time and money involved.¹⁵ This decision capped a series of decisions of the Reagan Court which overturned earlier decisions of the Warren Court equalising, to some degree, the rights of defendants in the criminal justice system with the powers of the police and prosecution.

Another crucial limitation on the right of blacks and other victims of discrimination to use the courts to obtain redress is the recent application of Rule 11 of the judicial code. Under this rule, designed to prevent frivolous cases, a losing litigant who was deemed not to have a good faith argument for the 'extension, modification or reversal of existing law' could previously be penalised by having to pay his or her opponent's court fees. More recently, in an attempt to stop business-sponsored cases clogging up the courts, this penalty was extended to cover the other side's legal expenses as well. This rule is now being applied, by courts dominated by Reagan-appointees, to civil rights cases. Thus, lawyers and organisations defending black rights now run the risk of heavy financial penalties if they lose cases – the NAACP Legal and Defense fund was recently hit by a \$90,000 penalty.

The cumulative effect of these recent Supreme Court decisions was summed up by Justice Thurgood Marshall in an address to federal

judges on 8 September 1989. They 'put at risk', he declared, 'not only the civil rights of minorities but the civil rights of all citizens . . . It is difficult to characterise last term's decisions as the product of anything other than a deliberate retrenchment of the civil rights agenda . . . Thirty-five years after the Supreme Court ended the era of legal segregation with the decision in *Brown v Board of Education*, we have come full circle. We are back where we started.'¹⁶

LOUIS KUSHNICK

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UK commentary

Europe for the Europeans: East End for the East Enders

Nationalism is on the increase across the whole of Europe. But whereas in Eastern Europe the far Right has resurfaced under the banner of anti-communism – with pre-war fascist groups, like the Iron Guard of Romania, re-emerging – in Western Europe the new

nationalism is based on popular racism. Hence, a wave of racial terrorism is presently sweeping Western Europe. And in Eastern Europe, too, Third World students and workers, often identified with the old communist regime, as well as Jews and other minorities, are the targets of nationalism. In East Germany, for instance, workers from Vietnam, Mozambique and Angola have been victimised.¹

Such terrorism has led, in recent months, to the deaths of three North Africans in France (one shot in Marseilles by a police officer; one shot dead – his friend paralysed – by the owner of a pancake stall in Saint-Florentine, south of Paris; the third mowed down in Roanne, in the Department of Loire, when a driver went berserk and drove into a crowd of North African youths). In Italy, too, violence has been unleashed. After a 19-year-old Moroccan youth was surrounded by a gang of masked men at a Florence carnival and stabbed, there were attacks in Rome, where a fire-bomb was thrown from a car into a hotel used by immigrants, and in Caserta (cheap immigrant labour is used there for tomato-picking), where immigrants' cars were set on fire. In Padua, letters have been circulated, signed by the 'Veneto Ku Klux Klan', urging Italians to kill blacks if they refuse to go home.² It is a story that is repeated across the map of Europe.

The different nationalisms and racisms developing in all these European countries vary in terms of the specific history of racism, fascism and colonialism in each. But the common cry that unites the disparate fascist groups (presently represented in the European parliament by 'The Group of the European Right' made up of seventeen MEPs from the Front National (France), Vlaams Blok (Belgium), Republikaner Partie (Germany)*) is 'Europe for the Europeans', 'Foreigners Out' – thus precipitating hostility towards black people within Europe's borders. In France, campaigners have pointed to the direct link between Jean Marie Le Pen's statements calling for the mass expulsion of Arab workers and their families and these latest attacks. The link is even more palpable both in Belgium, where a prominent member of the fascist Vlaams Blok, Xavier Buisseret, was arrested in February and charged with wounding three Moroccans attacked with baseball bats and iron bars, and in Norway, where the leader of the People's Movement Against Immigration has been jailed for his part in a bomb plot against an immigrant hostel. Indeed, in Norway, so great is the hostility towards immigrants that some prominent members of the old resistance to German occupation have joined forces with the far Right to preserve the 'Nordic Race'

* The Italian Social Movement (MSI) has left the group owing to a dispute with the German fascists over the 'Italianisation of South Tyrol and the suppression of its German-speaking population'.

and, in their words, 'resist now another occupation'.

The mainland European fascists, in encouraging racial violence, have a lot to learn from their British counterparts, who have long been associated with the racist violence that has become integral to British culture. One recent example of this interconnection occurred when a Somalian refugee was stabbed to death in Edinburgh in January 1989 by a gang of white youths. During the trial, the accused were supported by youths in the public gallery wearing National Front badges. One defendant, it was shown in Court, had also written letters from prison inscribed with the NF logo.³

In Britain, though, there is currently no one fascist party with a viable electoral strategy. The decline of the National Front's electoral ambitions in the late 1970s was largely attributed to Mrs Thatcher's 1978 'culture swamping' speech, when she was seen to speak out for ordinary white racist sentiment. The Tory Party provided a ready vehicle both for the racist vote and, through its various fringe groups and associations – like the Monday Club and WISE (Welsh, Irish, Scots, England) – for old style anti-immigration politicians, with figures like Lady Jane Birdwood providing a bridge between the right wing of the Tory Party and groups outside the parliamentary system. Such elements of the Tory Party have, however, remained relatively quiet over recent years. Instead, it has been the intellectuals of the New Right – with figures like Ray Honeyford and Roger Scruton – who have made the ideological running. In possession of a more sophisticated philosophy, based this time not on racial superiority, but on cultural separateness, the New Right made the old anti-immigration lobby look positively outmoded.

However, with the possibility of a defeat for Thatcherism – or at least a rough ride – at the next general election, cracks are emerging in the Tory race strategy. The old die-hard anti-immigration lobby is resurfacing, under the stewardship of Norman Tebbit. His first 'race' intervention was around the issue of the Hong Kong Chinese. Forty MPs joined forces with him to oppose the government's proposal to allow British passports to 50,000 Hong Kong businessmen and professionals and their families as a safeguard when Hong Kong is handed over to China in 1997. Tebbit, who put himself forward as the true upholder of Tory principles on immigration from which Mrs Thatcher, once his mentor, has deviated (it is not he who is disloyal), is not afraid of being called a racist. For 'If you say to a lot of people out there in the street Tebbit is a racist, they'll scratch the back of their heads and say, "Well, so am I. If that's what being a racist is, then I'm one as well."'⁴

Translated on the ground, in the deprived areas of the inner city, Tebbit's rhetoric and the manipulation of race as a political issue can only encourage more violence, more racist attacks. A link between

such anti-immigration rhetoric and fascist activities can be seen in the posters and stickers currently being put up by the British National Party (BNP) proclaiming 'Hong Kong Chinese? No room here'. Another unattributed sticker states 'Stop Immigration, Start Extermination'.

The BNP's literature focuses largely on the evils of multiculturalism (the unwelcome product of immigration upon which the British electorate was never consulted) and the liberal attitudes that have corrupted parliamentary democracy. As their poet 'Sniper' puts it in 'Ode to democracy':

Three cheers to our democracy
Where all may speak their mind
Unless they're white and loyal and straight
When writs and bars they'll find . . .
Two cheers for our democracy
Whose media enshrine
The rights of reds and blacks and queers
To push their party line.

For the BNP the burning issue is 'white rights'. In their magazine, *Spearhead*, and their paper, *British Nationalist*, whites, it is argued, are the victims of immigration in a number of ways. First, local authorities, corrupted by liberal and left-wing sentiment, have favoured the 'ethnics' and discriminated against whites, persecuting those who dare to speak out (like BNP leaders John Tyndall and John Morse, jailed in 1986 for inciting racial hatred). Ordinary white folk have allowed themselves to be cowed by the establishment:

No one to speak of Britain
In all that motley clan;
Not one to gird his loins
And stand up like a man.

The BNP, the true patriots ('King Arthur's sons'), linked to British soil through 'blood and honour', will, with 'race and nation as their creed', stand up like the 'bravest knights' for a new white ethnicity. Only those politically conscious whites can awaken others who have become downtrodden and accustomed to their situation. Only the BNP has the courage to say:

So down with our democracy
Its dirty day is done
The eleven hour is striking
And hasn't long to run
New banners now are streaming
Flamed against the sky

So rise with weapons gleaming
And swear to win or die.

One strategy the BNP is adopting is to go into areas where racial violence is already rife and then argue that it is whites, not blacks, who are the true victims of racial violence. This is not an election strategy, but an attempt to build up a following amongst disgruntled and often dispossessed whites. And no area is more fertile for such a strategy than Tower Hamlets in the East End of London – not least, because it is controlled by a Liberal local authority which has cynically manipulated racism and prejudice to hold on to power, and which has built up its base amongst some of the most racist and bigoted elements in the East End today.

* * *

Racial violence in Tower Hamlets has been well documented since at least 1978, when Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council produced its report, *Blood on the Streets*. During the ‘Paki-bashing’ era of the 1970s, Brick Lane (which lies at the heart of Tower Hamlets’ Bangladeshi community) witnessed the murders of Tosir Ali (1970) and Altab Ali (1978). Large demonstrations, including a 7,000-strong protest march from Brick Lane to Downing Street, were held in response. But the racial violence has persisted virtually without public comment. Yet when in February this year a white youth, 17-year-old John Stoner, was stabbed by eight Bengali youths at Morpeth School, Globe Town (the heartland of white reaction), the press descended on Brick Lane en masse. The history of racial violence in the area was conveniently ignored – as a representative of the Campaign for Bangladeshi Rights in the UK commented: ‘When Bengalis are attacked it is not racist, but as soon as one white is attacked then we are racist.’

The day before the attack on John Stoner, there had been an incident involving Stoner’s foster-father at Morpeth School, during which he had been called a racist and asked to leave the premises. That day, too, a 15-year-old Bengali boy had been waylaid outside another school in the area by a group of white youths wielding a four-foot metal spike. For weeks beforehand there had been persistent fighting between whites and Asians. Yet what precisely led up to the stabbing of John Stoner is hard to fathom. Teachers in the area are saying little, nor has Morpeth School to date offered any clear explanation. Amongst Bengali youth, however, who have recently formed the East End Youth Organisation to fight racism and defend the Bengali community, the Bengali boys who stabbed Stoner are considered to have restored some dignity to the community.

Following John Stoner's stabbing, his grandfather, George Happe, organised a demonstration from Morpeth School through Globe Town. This attracted the attention of the BNP, which leafleted the area in the family's support. Only when attempts were made to have the march banned, on the grounds of fascist involvement in it, did the family try to distance themselves from the BNP. They maintained that they were not racists but merely a concerned family, worried about *all* violence in the East End. The march was allowed to go ahead and, after leaving Morpeth School, was joined by members of the BNP who, two weeks later, organised their own 'Rights for Whites' march. Subsequently, the BNP announced that it was putting up four candidates in the May local elections – one in Spitalfields, the heart of the Bengali community, and two in Globe Town, where it polled its highest vote.

The message of the BNP is clear: it is here to help recapture the East End for the real East Enders, the beleaguered white community. In doing so, it is tapping into one of the areas of Britain with an indigenous fascist tradition. It was the East End which provided Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts with a following. In 1934 the British Union of Fascists formed branches in Stepney, Limehouse and Bethnal Green, claiming 4,000 members in the latter and polling 3,000 votes in the 1937 elections. The British left has always tended to focus on the Blackshirts' defeat in the Battle of Cable Street – obscuring the fact that Mosley, manipulating local patriotism, anti-communism and anti-semitism, did have a mass following in the East End.⁵ The first British National Party was inaugurated in 1960 in Bethnal Green. And Brick Lane itself has been a regular spot for fascist paper-sellers, despite the anti-fascists' brief success in the 1970s in removing them.

But the anti-semitism of Mosley's generation is today translated into hatred towards the Bangladeshis. The Bengali community faces discrimination in every sphere of life. In housing it occupies some of the most dilapidated and overcrowded housing stock in the country. Eighty-two per cent of the housing stock in Tower Hamlets is council-owned, but attempts to move Bengalis on to better (white) estates have led to fierce resistance from racist tenants, whose responses have ranged from petitioning to have Bengali families excluded (as occurred on the Isle of Dogs in 1989) to smashing up and defacing property with 'Pakis Out' signs even before they move in. Today, many Bengali families would rather remain in the safety of the poverty-stricken ghettos than be transferred to more comfortable properties such as in the Isle of Dogs, for instance, which is part of the Docklands Redevelopment Scheme.^{6*} In education, some 500 child-

* A family who refuses an offer of council housing can be declared intentionally homeless.

ren (95 per cent of them Bengali) are currently receiving no primary education whatsoever because the school system is so pitifully under-resourced (some children have not been to school for a year). Although the education authority has a statutory duty to guarantee all children an education, the High Court ruled recently that, under the 1944 Education Act, this was only a general duty and, therefore, there could be no recourse to action for the individual. Campaigners are now considering whether to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. The Liberal authority's latest proposal (with the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority, it is now in direct charge of education) is to provide special play centres, run by childminders, for children not in school – thus downgrading education further.⁷

Racial violence on housing estates and in and around schools has become a fact of life. In the summer of 1989 ILEA was forced to buy four buses to ferry children to and from the Stepney Green Ocean Estate because no one could assure Asian children the freedom to walk the streets without attack. Despite this appalling fact, there has been no formal investigation into racial violence in Tower Hamlets schools.

Policing, too, does not serve the Bengali community, but further criminalises their youth. Take the experience of one Bengali youth, Malik Miah. Attacks on his family left a brother requiring twenty-six stitches after being stabbed in a Stepney churchyard and left his father disabled with a broken leg after being attacked by a gang of fifteen youths. The police did nothing. But Malik Miah himself has been arrested, along with three other Bengali youths, and charged with attempted murder after the stabbing of a white man. The youths all profess their innocence. As the mother of one of them put it: 'For the last ten years we have been attacked, and we have received no help from the police. Now one white man is stabbed, and the police have arrested my son and his friends for something they had nothing to do with.'⁸ (She herself had been attacked in 1980 by a man wielding a wooden club with a nail in it.) The first ever community police station in Britain was established in Brick Lane, but 'the additional police presence in the Brick Lane area . . . ostensibly to safeguard the [Asian] community . . . promoted a greater sense of insecurity – from what is perceived as an "army of occupation" to which one has constantly to furnish documentary proof of the right of residence.'⁹

Unemployment amongst young Bengalis is also disproportionately high. And what work there is in the 'sweated labour' of the rag trade. In the streets and alleys surrounding Brick Lane, expensive leather jackets are sewn in cramped workplaces or in women's homes for a pittance and sold at a super profit in the West End stores. In terms of the poverty in which they live, the sweating of their

labour, the Bengalis are repeating the pattern of the East End Jewish immigrants before them. Yet is there any voice amongst the Jewish establishment, or in the Jewish students movement – so quick to allege anti-semitism amongst the anti-zionist Left – which has spoken up for the Bengali community, spoken out against racism, as public opinion turns against the Bengalis in the wake of the John Stoner affair?

This elemental racism – in housing, education, policing, on the streets, in work – is daunting enough and sets the Bengalis as a community apart. But it has been the local Liberal council which has exacerbated the problem, with policies that seem designed to pander to popular racism. The anti-immigration rhetoric of the ruling 'Liberal Focus' group at election time has long caused concern – and links have also been established between individual Liberals and members of the National Front in the neighbouring borough of Hackney.* In 1987 the council put its rhetoric into practice by evicting ninety Bangladeshi families on the ground that they had made themselves intentionally homeless by coming to Britain. In November 1987 the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), finding that Tower Hamlets Liberal Council had contravened the Race Relations Act in four different areas, served it with a non-discrimination notice. The CRE found that Tower Hamlets had the highest number of homeless families, of whom 69 per cent were black, mostly Bengali, living in bed and breakfast accommodation and the highest levels of overcrowding in Britain. Bangladeshi and other 'ethnic minority applicants' had been 'disproportionately allocated to two of the worst housing estates in the borough – both pre-war blocks, which suffered from defective electrics, damp, poor heating and a general state of disrepair.

Following the threat of legal action, the council was forced to address some of the CRE's criticisms. Negotiations with the London Docklands Development Corporation and housing associations resulted in the condition that sales of lands and dwellings should be linked to the building of large family homes. But what the council was forced to give (under the threat of legal action) with one hand, it was quick to take away (in the tradition of institutionalised racism) with the other. Thus, its 'sons and daughters letting policy', exposed by

*One such figure was Ray White who, in 1983, was chair of the North Hackney Liberals. In 1977, White had marched with the NF Honour Guard, minding its leaders, on a demonstration in Wood Green. And in the 1980s he was active in organising a white vigilante group on a Hackney estate.

More recently, in the May 1990 council elections, the chair of Hackney Liberal Democrats, councillor Colin Beadle, had his nomination forms signed by a former National Front organiser, Gary Russell. Beagle claims ignorance of Russell's fascist connections.¹⁰

Melanie Phillips in the *Guardian* (30 March 1989), in giving priority in housing allocation to the children of existing council tenants, inevitably favoured whites. Hence, out of seventy-eight lettings throughout the borough, seventy-one went to white tenants, one to a Bangladeshi and the remainder to other 'racial groups'.

The council's stance has fuelled a growth in popular racism that it certainly does not have the political will to quell. Indeed, it has fuelled it further, as witness the tenor of its campaign during the May 1990 council elections. The basis of that popular racism is the fictional claim that Bangladeshis get special privileges and that whites are the victims of reverse racism. Out of this has emerged a whole host of myths and stereotypes designed to boost white grievances. New houses being built in Stepney, for instance, say building workers to local white housewives, 'may be nice, but they're not for you, dear'. The council workers coming to carry out repairs tell belligerent white residents that if they had been black, the council would have got the work done sooner. In September 1989 a white mother kept her 5-year-old child from school on the grounds that the standard of education was terrible and that he would be forced to study Islam. The institutionalised racism that denies Bengali children a place in schools is excused on the grounds that 'education is not a part of their culture' anyway.¹¹

Throughout the John Stoner affair it has been maintained that the attack on him was racial (the police have classified it as such). Despite the family's repeated claim that they are not racist, during the march, 100 supporters – who included members of the BNP – chanted slogans like 'I'm gonna jump down, turn around, kick a Pakistani, jump down, turn around, kick him in the head' and 'We hate the Pakis, we hate the Pakis, we are the Paki haters'. In a carnival-style atmosphere, white residents leaned from windows to greet them, waving Union Jacks and occasionally bursting into renditions of 'Rule Britannia' and 'Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner'. Yet the Happe family have received backing in many quarters for their claims that they are not racist. The local *East London Advertiser*, which drew condemnation in 1984 for its support for a bogus community organisation, 'Fairplay for Whites', supports their initiative. And the Bishop of Stepney himself accepted George Happe's claim that 'we're not racist' at face value, and tried to calm community fears by speaking up for the protest organisers as ordinary East Enders.

'East End for the East Enders' is the Globe Town patriots' clarion call, a form of local nationalism even more narrow and bigoted than some of its European counterparts. And, at this local level, the patriots have gained power, for they form the base for the ruling Liberal Focus group and its policies of institutionalised racism. For George Happe, the right to the East End, to define just who and who

is not an East Ender, is what is at stake. As he told the *Guardian* (23 February 1990) 'It's nothing to do with racism. It's resentment. There are people living here who had hard lives. We took more stick than anybody in this country in the last war. Then they take our businesses. They take the heart out of the place.' Whites are now the victims of reverse racism. They have even tried to use the race relations baby – ethnicity – by arguing for white representation on community race bodies. It is a strategy in keeping with the 'white knights of the BNP'. But while the BNP seeks to build up a fascist street-force and ferment racial violence at the grassroots, the Liberal Focus grouping seeks to gain and hold political power and credibility at an institutional level. Yet there is an interplay between the two. In the May 1990 council elections, for example, both the BNP and the Liberal Focus highlighted the issue of education in their propaganda. Leaflets issued by the Liberal Focus group promised to dismantle all anti-racist education and scrap 'loony-left' initiatives such as the four buses provided by ILEA for black children. The BNP, which attempted to hold its election meeting at a school with a large Asian intake, promised that if it was returned to power, it would change the name from Osmani School (a hero of the Bangladesh civil war) back to Robert Montefiore School (an educationalist who, unknown to the BNP, was also a Jew). 'All this racial tension could be solved if the type of pupils that go to school at the moment were repatriated and replaced with British children', its spokesperson told the *East London Advertiser* (20 March 1990). Some members of Liberal Focus also produced a spoof Labour Party leaflet stating that the Labour Party would scrap the eviction policy and the 'sons and daughters' policy and see that 'Bangladeshis are treated fairly'.

Significantly, support for the Tower Hamlets Liberal Focus comes from areas like Globe Town, amongst entrenched white tenants' associations which have long resisted attempts to integrate the Bengali community. This particular brand of 'liberalism' draws succour from the idea that East End belongs to the whites and is resonant of Mosley's legacy. But the Globe Town residents do not represent whites per se; they do not represent the most deprived sections of the white community – the young single mother living on social security, the low paid, the unemployed, the homeless. These whites represent the most chauvinistic elements of the white working class in Britain today, attempting to preserve all that is racist, reactionary and backward in white working-class culture. Their views are not far from Sniper's. Are such views really in keeping with liberalism – or has the Liberal Party been infiltrated by a pernicious and ugly racist tendency that it is high time it excised?

LIZ FEKETE

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Theology and practice for the '90s*

My friends, I am honoured to be invited here by Evangelical Christians for Racial Justice today to share some of my thoughts and concerns. ECRJ and your journal, *Racial Justice*, have a special place for me – every time I ask myself why I am still a Christian, I am reminded by your work that the struggle continues. The Refugee Forum thanks your organisers and members for the support you have given us in difficult times.

The scripture theme you have chosen for your conference in James 2:5 brings back memories for me of seventeen to twenty years ago. As a young pastor, part of the Baptist flock in South Africa, I was surrounded with all the pie-in-the-sky Evangelical nonsense, and it was the book of James that taught me that you have to feed, clothe, defend people first, and then give them the Gospel – not the other way around. It was this teaching, and my understanding of Evangelical deliverance, which led the Baptist church to be the first to ban and isolate me.

Today, I want to reach out and share with you, first, what is happening around us right here and now in Britain and Europe, as a whole and in relation to 1992; and then, some reflections, based on theological reflections from the Urban Rural Mission, on the meaning

* Edited version of a paper delivered by Ronnie Moodley at the Evangelical Christians for Racial Justice Annual Conference, 24 March 1990.

of our mission. By incorporating this analysis, I hope to show why we need a grassroots perspective in theology and what it means in practice.

In Britain, the number of immigrants, migrants and refugees being deported has more than doubled in the past year. From your experience of working in anti-deportation campaigns, you know what a threat of deportation means in human terms – that anxiety and misery is being caused to thousands of people. Black people are picked up on the street, at their homes, at their workplace, at the registry office where they go to get married, at their doctor when they go for treatment, at the housing department or the social security office – picked up by police or immigration officers, detained for a few days and bundled out of the country – unless they are part of a community of support, a community of resistance which will get them out of detention, call out a lawyer, resist and challenge the system which breaks up families and friendships and hopes and dreams at the stroke of a pen. I shall return later to the theme of resistance.

Deportations are only one aspect of what is happening in Britain to Third World immigrants, migrants, refugees and the dependants of settled black communities. Refugees fleeing torture, detention and death now find walls of paper and regulations blocking their flight to Britain. They can't get in without a visa – but no visas are issued to refugees. They can't get on an aeroplane without papers – the Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act of 1987 fines airlines carrying passengers without papers. Those who manage to get to Britain are treated with hostility and suspicion. Sometimes they are detained for weeks or months by the authorities of a country which they thought believed in human rights, and then told they are 'bogus' refugees and will be sent back to the country they fled. Some, like Siho Iyigoven last October, are driven to their death by this treatment – he and a cell-mate in detention set fire to themselves rather than be sent back to Turkey. Those who are admitted are usually not given full refugee status – over 85 per cent of refugees admitted to Britain now get exceptional leave to remain – a precarious status which gives them no right to have their families with them – rather than full refugee status.

Family unity, and the values of the family, which are much stressed by our government, have no application to the families of black people. The primary purpose rule, which requires married couples to satisfy an immigration officer that the marriage was not for settlement purposes, causes heartbreak to thousands of happily married couples, many with children, as over 50 per cent of applications from husbands from abroad to join their wives here are refused. Even if that hurdle is passed, family members can't join fathers who are on income support, or who haven't got a large enough place for them to live in. Sons and

daughters who are 21 or over can't join their parents. Even those children who were wrongly denied entry over the years because the Home Office didn't believe they were 'genuine' sons and daughters of their parents, and who have paid for and gone through DNA tests to prove they are genuine, if they are now over 21, they're being refused entry.

Then there are the unauthorised workers, working in the sweatshops, the fast-food joints, the petrol stations, working as domestic slaves in the homes of the rich, exploited for their illegal status, working exhausting hours in unhealthy conditions, unable to strike or make demands for fear of denunciation to the Home Office. The intensive use of internal immigration controls effectively bars them from access to public housing, the health service and welfare benefits. They are the most marginalised, the most exploited and the most isolated and vulnerable of all immigrant, migrant and refugee communities. They come from all over the Third World – from Somalia and Sri Lanka, from Palestine and the Philippines, from Colombia, from Eritrea, from Turkey, from Syria – and speak a multitude of languages. Some have fled economic immiseration, some political repression – but almost invariably the misery in their own country which causes them to come to Britain has been western interference, by arms deals or aid deals or IMF deals which distort the economies and the politics alike of Third World countries.

It is not just Britain which is barring the door to Third World peoples. The visa controls, the penalties for airlines, the deportations, the passport checks are Europe-wide and are part of the harmonising of Europe's treatment of non-EC nationals in the creation of 1992, Fortress Europe. For the past five years ministers, senior police officers and civil servants from European countries have been meeting to coordinate policy on the movement of drug traffickers, terrorists and non-Europeans in the single Europe of 1992. German and Danish police officers were working with British police at the Notting Hill Carnival of 1989. Increased coordination on immigration will mean more internal controls for black people throughout Europe. A common policy will see to it that expulsion from one European country means expulsion from the whole of Europe for unauthorised workers and those deemed undesirable. Europe does not want its sixteen million Third World people, though it wants their cheap labour – and now it may find it does not even want that, as the Eastern European countries and their reserves of cheap labour have been unlocked to western multi-nationals. The East Germans are already forcing Third World immigrants and refugees out of accommodation, out of jobs and out of West Germany.

The dream of a 'Greater Europe' is, for us, the nightmare of expulsion, separation, racial attack and fascism. The fascist parties in

Britain and Europe are surging forward. Only two weeks ago there was a 'Rights for Whites' march in the East End of London, where I live. The area was plastered with fascist stickers. Where the fascists march, the racial attacks follow. In Italy there has been a spate of racial attacks – in a country which until last year had been little known for racial violence.

These are the human challenges which face us. How do we confront them, as Christians working for racial justice? As concerned people our task is not to speak for the oppressed, not to fight their battles for them. Our task is one of empowerment.

I am very proud to be involved in the world family of the Urban Rural Mission (part of the World Council of Churches), which organises urban and rural people for empowerment. The URM perspective of mission, of organising and empowering, is close to the grassroots perspective of theology that it is among the lowest of the low, the unknown, invisible people that we find the work of Jesus as organiser. That is why I am convinced that the challenges of URM give us a basis for developing theology and practice for the 1990s.

In John's gospel, Jesus says: 'I have come in order that they may have life – life in all its fullness.' We are called to take part in this work – bringing life, restoring life. In order to perform this task and show the way for us to join in it, 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us'. What does this mean?

It means that it is not enough to *talk* in the language of mission, not enough to proclaim salvation. We must give flesh to these statements, in terms of what it means to bring that fullness of life to actual people in specific and concrete situations. This means going among the sweatshop workers in the inner city, those facing deportation, the families facing racial attacks on the housing estates. What sort of life do they struggle for, and how is it found, received and shared? The answer can never be discovered in the abstract. It cannot be answered by reading reports or talking to church or community leaders. We cannot wait for some bishop to tell us when it is a Christian right to act. We must go to people, stay with them, listen and learn.

Our perspective, therefore, comes from our practice, and is constantly revised by our practice.

The Pharisees failed to start with people; instead, they began with a set of theological certitudes and forced them on to the human situation. Our present-day Pharisees would have us work only through the officially recognised agencies and channels, which are deaf to the experiences of those they claim to work for. Jesus started with the human condition and asked what will bring, restore, life.

Starting with people means being sensitive to the cultural reality and religious heritage which is the soil in which each person's existence is rooted. Failure to respect that reality is failure to respect

their humanity.

Starting with people means accepting that human beings are made in God's image and, as such, are given responsibility for the created order. People are co-stewards with God of creation: they are subjects, not objects. Any structure of society, such as a system of immigration control, which maintains people as objects, and denies them their right to be subjects of their history, is a violation of their humanity.

How are we, as stewards, to deal with the problems posed by the use and abuse of power? Because people's experience of power has been dominated through the ages by experience of its abuse, power has come to be regarded almost as an evil in itself, something which good people must shun. But that response to power constitutes a refusal to fulfil the task of stewardship. To have power is of the essence of our humanity. Its exercise is fundamental to the exercise of human freedom. Since power comes from God, it is meant to be used for his creative and redemptive purpose. If it is abused and used for evil purposes, human beings have a duty to prevent and correct its misuse. This means, concretely, fighting against the exploitation of unauthorised workers, the misuse of economic power by employers; fighting against police brutality, the misuse of state power to harass and intimidate black communities; fighting all forms of institutionalised racism, where power is wielded at the expense of humanity.

In his great Nazareth sermon at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus takes upon himself the words of the prophet Isaiah:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

The present-day proclamation of God's deliberate choice to side with the oppressed, as the central theme of 'liberation theology', is true to this biblical revelation. It means taking an unconditional and passionate stand for those denied basic human rights, such as the right to live with your family, the right to a decent livelihood, the right to live without fear and in liberty, against the privileged who deny those rights to others.

Christians who care about their neighbours will care about the nature of the political kingdom which radically affects them. The command to love is the key to the relationship between seeking the kingdom of God, and working for a more just society – for a better political kingdom. Jesus makes that connection in his parable concerning caring for the hungry, the naked and those in prison. Mission demands a serious commitment to the political task of working for a

world which more faithfully reflects gospel values. Political involvement requires careful analysis of society. People are in pain. People are excluded, imprisoned when they claim asylum, hunted down for working illegally, deported, separated from their families – why? Love for one's neighbour involves more than simply responding to symptoms. It is necessary to analyse and seek to understand the complex nature and dynamics of a society which prevents the liberation of people into fullness of life.

The Scriptures witness very clearly to Jesus' teaching that mission is not something we say but something we do. 'You will know them by their fruits.' 'Be doers of the word.' Anything less is betrayal and collusion with the powers of evil.

Emilio Castro said, in 1985: 'Christians should become the ferment within history which could save that history. The transfiguration of the world is the goal towards which our Christian mission should work.' This transformation of the world calls for liberation of human beings at every level of existence where people are bound and oppressed in any way which denies their humanity. Ultimately, liberation and salvation are synonyms which work in the struggle for economic justice against the exploitation of people by people. They work in the struggle for human dignity against political oppression of human beings by their fellows. They work in the struggle for solidarity against the alienation of person by person. They work in the struggle of hope against despair.

The Christian understanding of liberation is informed by the biblical understanding of justice. Liberation is no mere overturning of one particular set of power roles only to be replaced by another. The goal is nothing less than a qualitatively new community in which the role of oppressor and oppressed is completely done away with.

There are powerful interests at work against liberation. The economic interests of the great multinational companies, the imperial interests of the western governments, combine to support corrupt and dictatorial regimes in Third World countries – Iraq, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Israel – and to destroy liberation movements; the political and economic interests of those same governments combine to bar Europe's doors against those fleeing here. There will be no freedom without a struggle. If people are going to be successful in this struggle, then organising for power – that is, enabling people to discover their worth as human beings in the image of God, their dignity, their confidence and their collective wisdom, which lead to effective community action – is absolutely essential. The failure to recognise this need – by, for example, agencies who still adopt a 'begging-bowl' attitude towards the urban and rural poor in struggle – reveals a refusal to recognise the vital dimension in the process by which the forces of evil are contained and defeated.

People must be involved in the process of their own liberation. Freedom is a function of being human. Participation is the practice of freedom. Unless people are encouraged and enabled to participate fully in the process of liberation, there can be no true liberation at all. Any 'liberation project' which undervalues and discounts participation as a fundamental feature of the way (and goal) of liberation, should be regarded with profound suspicion. The best protection against all forms of fascism and totalitarianism is full and meaningful participation of people in the process of liberation.

That process is a process of resistance. Christians belong to Christ, not to Caesar. They cannot serve two masters. They have no choice but to resist the forces of evil. Resistance is an attitude of vigilance in the defence of the fullness of life. It is every attitude and action, individual and collective, which goes against powers which threaten people and God's creative work in the world (specific threats include economic exploitation and the marginalisation and victimisation of people).

Wherever the laws of a society consistently and grossly violate the laws of God, there should be no doubt where the Christian duty lies. There are many situations in life where obedience to God requires disobedience to Caesar. The civil rights movement in the United States in the 1950s, the struggle against apartheid, the *intifada* in the occupied territories against Israel's might – all require breaking the law. In Britain, resistance, for immigrants, migrants and refugees, means not only giving support to those detained, refused or deported, but actively working against such evils, by confronting the unjust laws which allow them. The Refugee Forum has set up an underground railroad, in which Christians and members of other religious communities, and others working in Christ's way, quietly break the law by offering sanctuary to those who have exhausted all other means of preventing deportation. Civil disobedience is a necessary quality of Christian mission wherever the laws of a society do gross damage to human beings. Such laws are lawless laws – the laws of criminal oppressors. Human beings have a moral obligation to resist them.

Finally, my position, friends, is that through understanding mission, we learn to be grassroots oriented. Gone are the grand intellectualising words of liberation/black theology – whatever happened to the scholars? In order to understand our role, we must create consciousness, and the basic tenet of consciousness in the political sense is psychological liberation. To be psychologically liberated, we have to start at our feet, with action on the ground, at a grassroots level.

Jesus as organiser, I believe, was at the grassroots. That is why he chose ordinary people. Jesus began to identify the persons whom he called to be his followers, and when he invited and challenged, 'Come

with me, and I will teach you to catch people', who were his first recruits for his organising programme? The countryside of Galilee, with its lake and water resources, made fishing the main trade and source of livelihood in the community there. And it was from the ranks of this popular occupation that Jesus chose the first four members of his core group. Similarly, when we started Refugee Forum, we had to start with people on the ground, from the marginalised communities themselves. It is with this call to grassroots organisation and resistance that we call upon many of you, not to wait for 1992. 1992 has already begun, for the immigrant, migrant and refugee communities.

We can see the new horizon dawning in South Africa. Freedom is around the corner. It will not be handed out on a plate; it has to be taken. It is the grassroots who will ensure that freedom is taken, and not given. Here in Europe, too, we have to retain that grassroots perspective and that orientation to action, to support those who are active, to ensure that we are part of their everyday struggle.

The tasks are enormous. We have to expose paternalism, which is another form of racism. Paternalism is alive and flourishing. There are too many white professionals, academics, experts, consultants, drawing fat salaries for work in 'race relations', too many agencies and quangos collecting large grants for 'refugee work' – work supposedly on our behalf, but undertaken without consulting, without hearing, without listening to our stories or involving us. There is paternalism among blacks, too, and self-seeking; being a Christian so as to climb the ladder and sit next to a bishop. We must bring them to the ground, and give them a dose of the Holy Spirit, remind them of people's struggles such as the *intifada* organised by our Palestinian brothers and sisters. It is because we believe that it is those on the ground who come first, and cannot be sold out, that we in the community have a saying, 'If you sleep with the dogs, you get bitten by the fleas.'

In conclusion, we must learn to respect what those who suffer injustice have to say about our world. Institutionalised power tries to silence them, but with their own initiatives, and our love and concern, hope and deliverance will come. This is our quest for a true humanity, from a grassroots perspective.

Refugee Forum

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Book reviews

Intifada: the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation

By ZACHARY LOCKMAN and JOEL BEININ, editors (Boston, South End Press, 1989). 423pp. US\$15.00 pb

Palestine and Israel: the uprising and beyond

By DAVID McDOWALL (London, I.B. Tauris & Co, 1989). 322pp. £14.95 hb

Intifada: the Palestinian uprising

By DON PERETZ (Boulder, London, Westview Press, 1990). 246pp. US\$14.95 pb

Intifada: the Palestinian uprising – Israel's third front

By ZE'EV SCHIFF and EHUD YA'ARI (New York, London, Simon and Schuster, 1990). 352pp. US\$22.95 hb

The *intifada*, now halfway through its third year, has lasted long enough to vanish from the newspapers and reappear packaged for bookshop shelves. Of the volumes reviewed here only one – that edited by Zachary Lockman and Joel Beinín – captures its spirit and celebrates its transforming power. A compilation of several superb analytical essays, eyewitness accounts, photographs and poetry, this South End Press book makes the next two volumes on this list – one by a Briton and the other by an American – seem only to touch the surface of things. The final volume, by the defence editor of the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* and the Middle East affairs correspondent for Israeli television, quite literally penetrates the surface, but does so in ways which add little to its credibility.

Lockman and Beinín's *Intifada*, an undertaking of the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), begins with an ad-

mirably compressed introductory essay by Edward Said which sets the tone for what follows. He places the unfolding *intifada* and subsequent PLO initiatives in the context of an occupation which, 'for all its deliberate and programmatic humiliation of Palestinians, its bare-knuckled attempts to rob a whole people of nationhood, identity and history, its systematic assault on civil institutions and vulnerabilities, could be seen as extending the logic of earlier Zionists like Herzl, Jobotinsky and Ben-Gurion into the present'. In rehearsing this history and describing the uprising as 'a community finding its way together', Said is concerned that readers 'become partners in the common struggle, and not onlookers or mere passive observers'.

Several other Palestinians, including Rashid Khalidi, Salim Tamari, Lisa Taraki and Azmy Bishara, an Israeli citizen, make excellent contributions in which they examine at greater length the antecedents and meaning of the uprising, and its impact on Palestinian society and on Israel. Israel's origins and founding myths are explored by Harvard University's Zachary Lockman in an essay called 'Original sin', while a member of the Israeli Socialist Left, Reuven Kaminer, describes the protest movement of which he is a part.

It is fitting that the United States is given a section all to itself in this book. Could Israel sustain the occupation without American largesse, which now at the official level amounts to \$10 million per day? Vivid eyewitness testimony to the use of 'Made in USA' tear gas and bullets to quell the uprising, an essay by Noam Chomsky on 'Israel's role in US foreign policy' and a description of the obstacles faced by isolated 'Middle East peace activists' in the US demonstrate just how urgent is the need to make Americans 'partners in the common struggle'. If any book can make a passive onlooker determined to do something to support the *intifada*, this is the one.

The same cannot be said about the books by McDowall and Peretz. McDowall's *Palestine and Israel* is not so much concerned with the uprising itself as with the historical background, international context and future prospects of the 'question of Palestine'. It has strong sections on the situation of Israeli Palestinians, on what 'democracy' actually means in Israel today and might mean tomorrow, and on the democratic character of the *intifada*. But it is marred by poor editing (there are numerous misspellings, George Shultz's name included), by what seems an excessive concentration on the 'strife' between the PLO and residents of the occupied territories, and by occasionally inadequate interpretations.

Writing about the 'demographic battle' in late 1988, he can perhaps be forgiven for his lack of prescience: 'The claim of 400,000 Soviet Jews wishing to make *aliyah* hardly stands up to scrutiny.' But he should have looked more deeply into the forces behind Gaza's 'Islamic Revival'. He writes about the Islamic Resistance Movement

or HAMAS without taking into account evidence that during the first year of the *intifada* HAMAS was receiving Israeli support as part of its divide and conquer strategy.

Don Peretz, in *Intifada*, does bring in evidence of Israeli backing for HAMAS and in general provides a satisfactory treatment of the course of the *intifada* during its first year and a half and of the Israeli arsenal of repression. Given the tendency in the US to append the word 'violent' to the Palestinian uprising, his analysis of the leaflets issued by the Unified National Leadership is especially useful: in the great majority of cases, they called for non-violent actions. He also writes well about the growth of a 'revolutionary culture' and its impact on Israeli society and about the international repercussions of the uprising.

But by Peretz's last paragraph, Israelis and Palestinians are equally victimised and it all seems too much to disentangle: 'Perhaps the search for solutions in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the attainment of conflict resolution, is too much to expect. Perhaps a more modest approach would be conflict management', which could include the 'IDF withdrawal from heavily populated Palestinian areas, lifting the ban on nationalist symbols, reopening schools and universities, and a halt to stone throwing and other violent manifestations'. Peretz admits that 'conflict management along these lines would satisfy neither the Palestinian nor the Israeli militant nationalists', but it 'could provide time for devising new alternatives and diminish many of the harsher aspects of the Intifada that both Palestinians and Israelis now suffer'.

Neither Peretz nor Schiff and Ya'ari can see the Palestinians in a state of their own. Peretz just can't see it happening; Schiff and Ya'ari insist it can't be allowed to happen. The Israeli authors denounce the 'naive sermonising' of the Israeli Left 'about making room for a PLO-led Palestinian state without links to Jordan' as 'simplistic' and at odds 'with Israel's most basic security needs'. They recognise that there is a need to negotiate with the PLO, but there can be only one 'meaningful solution': a 'tripartite option that brings Jordan, a Palestinian entity in the territories, and the State of Israel together in a single settlement package'.

According to Schiff and Ya'ari, the permanently demilitarised 'Palestinian entity' will be occupied by Israeli forces for as long as the attitude of the Arab world makes this necessary. Palestinians must forfeit forever 'the right of return', 'which is essentially a means of destroying the State of Israel from within. The issue cannot be open to negotiation.'

But, in return, the 'entity' will 'receive political independence, albeit limited in certain respects so that their right to self-determination will not infringe on the same right of others. If they

violate the treaty, however, they stand to lose their own sovereign status, perhaps forever.'

To Schiff and Ya'ari, these are quite substantial concessions, made necessary because 'the Palestinians have smashed the status quo beyond repair' and 'opened up a third front against Israel, forcing it to be on the ready to fight against regular armies and terrorist actions along its border, while contending with a mass civil uprising that shuns standard weapons but uses other forms of violence quite effectively'.

After doing a thorough job describing the conditions of occupation that produced an 'enraged proletariat', the authors take it upon themselves to rehabilitate the IDF. Demonstrations are generally described as 'riots', with 'angry mobs' forcing soldiers to resort to heavy-handed methods to maintain law and order. 'Although most of the casualties were leaders of the riots,' they assert at one point, 'too many were people who had happened upon the scene by chance, including children.'

The authorities were forced into other unpalatable acts: 'What could not be avoided was the extensive use of collective punishment.' Palestinian orchards had to be uprooted so those throwing firebombs could not use them for cover; houses had to be demolished, as the British recognised in the Mandate period. In general, the Palestinians had themselves to blame for their predicament: 'What had happened, sad as it is to say, is that the troops were brutalizing the Palestinian population because the *intifada* had brutalized the IDF.' No mention is made of such landmarks of *intifada* repression as the April 1988 attack on the village of Beita, when fourteen houses were destroyed by the IDF in 'retaliation' for the killing of an Israeli teenager by her Israeli guard.

But more insidious than this sort of apologetics is the book's pretence to inside information. Without citing a single source or providing a single footnote, Schiff and Ya'ari write as if they are privy to Shin Bet's most sensitive files – and perhaps they are. They name 'leaders' of the Unified National Leadership who have never been identified publicly, write down their thoughts and describe their actions. Several of these 'leaders' were deported by the Israeli government.

Although it might be reassuring to many people to discover that there were, after all, reasons for particular arrests and deportations, these sections of the book read like a piece of 'faction' in which a few key characters shape the actions of the 'angry mob' and for a while are able to move the plot forward. As for the minor characters, the faceless leaders who function at the level of popular committees, they are a menace to their own people as well as the Israelis: 'As the mass demonstrations became less frequent, toward the summer of 1988, the popular committees felt obliged to instigate violent incidents, so as to

prevent the uprising from dying out. Formed as classic civilian-support bodies, they were being transformed into local operational commands whose main interest was in fomenting unrest. At the same time, to ensure that the population would not slip out of their grasp, they began to subject it to increasingly brutal threats. In this new mode, the committees naturally drew attention to themselves and inevitably invited Israeli retaliation.' The popular committees were outlawed in August 1988 – to the relief of the local population we are left to suppose.

But, of course, the *intifada* has managed to sustain itself for a further two years, and to understand why we must leave Schiff and Ya'ari and return to the South End Press. A short poem by Hanan Mikha'il-Ashrawi called 'Demonstration' restores us to Edward Said's sense of 'a community finding its way together' which is the essence of the *intifada*:

The tire burns in an empty square.
One child, pockets filled with
Carefully collected stones,
Stares at the army patrol.

At his funeral we chanted
'Mother of the martyr rejoice,
All youths are your children.'

Boston

NANCYMURRAY

Tea in the Harem

By MEHDI CHAREF (London, Serpent's Tail, 1989). 157pp. £6.95

'You can always hide an empty stomach, but a hovel is there for all to see. Whatever happened to dignity?'

Majid came from Algeria to a Paris bidonville when he was seven. He has memories of his mother, Malika, dancing in a circle with the other women back home. Now she just yells at him all the time. She does two jobs to keep the family, since her husband fell on his head in a building site accident and became another child to care for.

Malika collects free shoes for her children from the Town Hall at Christmas, but prides herself on the fact that they are the cleanest and best turned out children there. As well as holding the family together, she supports her French neighbours, when their husbands beat them or their children need looking after.

Majid was kicked out of technical college and can't find a job. He hangs around with mates – Algerian, West Indian and French – whose

lives consist of hanging out on the estate where Majid's family have ended up, driving the neighbours mad with their loud music, vandalising cars, boozing, drugs, thieving, and a little amateur whoring and pimping. Majid goes along on many of their expeditions. But he wasn't born into the concrete, as they were:

They grow up and they begin to take on the characteristics of concrete: they're dry and cold and hard, to all appearances indestructible – but they've got hidden cracks. They get wider over time, and deeper. They expand like a lake . . . an indelible scar . . . a great gash . . . right down to your guts . . . They eat into your soul . . . When you try to break the silence and the self-destructiveness, violence takes the upper hand, and you turn savage.

You never recover from the concrete. It never leaves you.

Majid's conflict is between his duty and love for his family, which makes him take a low-paid but steady welding job, and solidarity with his mates, which makes him walk out of it after two hours. It's more: it's between proving himself to them – which makes him go out pimping for a local prostitute – and being true to his own values – which makes him give her all his earnings at the end of the night. At the end of the book, there's a suggestion that some of his values have communicated themselves to the others: his French friend, Pat, waits to get arrested in a gesture of solidarity with Majid, who is arrested in a stolen car after the others have abandoned it.

The book is a raw, graphic testimony to the crippling effects of poverty and marginalisation, which distort human values into their opposites. There is no movement or vision to transmute hurt into hope, and so on the estate, neighbourliness and concern have become warped into vigilantism in the older white residents, while among the youth pride and courage have been distorted into a defensive, swaggering callousness.

The simple values Malika brings with her, and Majid inherits – of genuine concern and solidarity – are the wild flowers in this desert of concrete. And Charef's message is that concrete cannot bloom; it can only be destroyed, along with the system of exploitation, racism and institutionalised neglect that produces such wasted lives.

London

FRANCES WEBBER

Ashes of Izalco

By CLARIBEL ALEGRIA and DARWIN J. FLAKOLL. Translated by Darwin J. Flakoll (Willimantic, CT, Curbstone Press, 1989). 173pp.

La mujer habitada

By GIOCONDA BELLI (Mexico, Editorial Diana, 1989). 342pp.

Dr Alfonso Rojas was a young Nicaraguan physician practising medicine in the Salvadoran town of Santa Ana when the 1932 *matanza*, or massacre, took place, in which (according to official estimates) at least 30,000 peasants and Indians died at the hands of the Salvadoran military commanded by the country's new dictator, General Martinez. Dr Rojas is one of the characters in *Ashes of Izalco*: thirty years after the massacre he is described by his daughter Carmen, who has, in one of the novel's multiple narratives, returned from the United States to her family home for her mother's funeral:

For years Dad has spent his free hours writing speeches and articles, sending bales of telegrams to the five presidents urging them to take this or that step which would further the cause of unity. In his office there are boxes full of news clippings, letters, communiques, grandiose projects for overthrowing the Somoza clan.

The issue of Central American unity still remains contested half a century later. It is a contest that has been waged over the last decades through the armed struggles of the national liberation organisations of its countries, especially El Salvador and Nicaragua, and has most recently been staged there in what Edward Herman and Frank Brodhead have referred to as 'demonstration elections'.¹ In March 1989, in El Salvador, the right-wing ARENA party, whose political pedigree of reaction can be traced back from its contemporary figurehead Roberto D'Aubisson to the military government of General Martinez, came to power in an election in which two-thirds of eligible voters did not vote. Barely a year later, in February 1990, Daniel Ortega, president of Nicaragua's revolutionary Sandinista government, after more than two decades struggling against the Somoza government and nearly ten years resisting a US-supported counter-revolution, acknowledged electoral defeat to the Violeta Chamorro-headed UNO coalition. Alegria and Flakoll's *Ashes of Izalco*, originally published in Spanish in 1966, and *La mujer habitada*, the first novel by Nicaraguan poetess Gioconda Belli, who also worked in the information service of the Sandinista government, perhaps mark, within these seemingly unanticipated political developments, the culmination of a particular historical moment. In their

narrative review, however, of specific articulations of that history, they suggest retrospectively new possibilities for its necessarily critical reconstruction.

Ashes of Izalco, co-authored in alternating voices by Salvadoran Alegria who, like Dr Rojas, was born in Nicaragua, and her US-born husband and translator Flakoll, not only narrates the complex historical processes that continue to distinguish the 1932 *matanza* as crucial to the Salvadoran political struggle – the funeral of Carmen’s mother, Isabel, is immediately followed by that of Colonel Gutierrez, one of the military participants in the massacre – but insists, furthermore, on the larger ‘american’ context of that struggle. Carmen’s mother has bequeathed to her daughter the diary of one Frank Wolff, a North American writer and convalescent alcoholic, who visited El Salvador in late 1931 in search of a new significance to his derelict life and met, instead, in the provincial town of Santa Ana, Isabel, Carmen’s mother, the wife of Alfonso. Frank’s journal writings from that time thus provide a chronologically discrepant counterpoint to Carmen’s reminiscences of her return thirty years later. Yet each of them must, from their different historical and geopolitical positions, come to terms with the question of the subordination of women and their marginalisation within the domain of the political. Frank’s emergent relationship with Isabel, an association that is made possible by her own frustrated and romanticised ambition to escape her domestic situation in Santa Ana, is itself frustrated and ultimately terminated by the violent military suppression of the peasant uprising. The date set by Frank for his escape with Isabel is made to coincide with the very date of the *matanza*, and in the end the socially confined Isabel is no more able to change her domestic situation than Frank is able to grasp for himself the political consequences of the brutal history into which he has unwittingly intruded and with which he is now complicit.

Like Frank, but for reasons of class that are more marked for their want of national difference, Lavinia, the *mujer habitada* (or inhabited woman) of Belli’s novel, is isolated from the social and political revolutionary challenges being raised around her. The well-educated daughter of a wealthy Nicaraguan family, now a professional architect, Lavinia becomes the lover of her office colleague, Felipe. Living in a house of her own as part of her programme of personal independence, Lavinia is roused late one night by Felipe who asks temporary refuge for the seriously wounded Sebastian. In assenting to the request, Lavinia for the first time encounters the Movimiento, the national liberation movement. By the end of the novel she will have become a commando in one of its major actions: the hostage-taking at the house-warming party at General Vela’s residence that she herself has designed. Dedicated to Nora Astorga, the FSLN partisan known

for her role in the execution of a leading Somozista, and loosely based for its final act on the Christmas 1974 Los Robles action in which three women commandos participated,² *La mujer habitada* is the narrative of the political growth of its heroine. The conventional paradigm for that growth, one that attributes women's political partisanship to romantic involvement, while it is not dismantled by the novel's plot, is, nonetheless, redeployed in a layered self-critical account. The first-person voice of an Indian woman in the resistance to the Spanish conquest that merges finally with the third-person relation of Lavinia's political development suggests, too, a deeper history to the question of gender, ethnicity and politics in Central America. As architect and daughter of an aristocratic family, Lavinia is asked to play herself as her undercover role in the Movement: 'Aparentemente, para lo unico que iba a servirle al Movimiento era para ser quien era.' Whereas forty years earlier, in neighbouring El Salvador, Isabel had seen no escape from her social identity and domestic confinement beyond an imagined and aborted romance, Lavinia's very class and gender positions are enlisted by the resistance and materially transformed.

In November 1989, El Salvador's FMLN launched a major offensive in the capital city of San Salvador. The ARENA government has yet to agree to negotiations with the resistance. Then, in December 1989, the United States military invaded Panama to restore an 'elected' government to power. And as the UNO coalition takes over the government of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas became again, as president Daniel Ortega said following the February elections, the 'opposition'. The English translation of *Ashes of Izalco* and the publication of *La mujer habitada* in 1989 could not, any more than Dr Rojas in his dreams of Central American unity, have foreseen these historical developments in the region. Their critical renarrations of the past, however, propose now significant contributions to rethinking the immediate future, particularly the role of women – and North Americans, in new global and regional contexts.

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Fight for the forest: Chico Mendes in his own words

Edited by DUNCAN GREEN (London, Latin America Bureau, 1989). 96pp. £2.95

Fight for the forest started life as a two-and-a-half-hour interview with Chico Mendes, which was to form part of a book on social movements in Brazil. The murder of Mendes on 22 December 1988 has turned it into his epitaph. This is a slim book of less than 100 pages, easily digested, but long remembered. Many will set out to read it from an ecological viewpoint, but the political lesson it teaches 'is about forging a collective response and concrete alternatives to destruction, poverty and oppression . . .'

Chico Mendes was a rubber tapper who, in his early manhood, acquired a most valuable weapon: to read and write. 'From the last century until 1970, schools were forbidden on any rubber estate in the Amazon. The rubber estate owners wouldn't allow it . . . because if a rubber tapper's children went to school, they would learn to read, write and add up and would discover to what extent they were being exploited.' A communist exile from Bolivia taught him to read and write using the political columns of a long out-of-date newspaper. And it was this man who also gave Mendes a basic education in liberation struggle. For Chico Mendes's fight for the forest starts with the workers of that forest. The rubber tappers, the *seringueiros*, were victims of a system of debt bondage. The wealth that rubber created stayed in the hands of the estate owners, who withheld land, education and health care from the creators of that wealth.

Chico Mendes took up a leading role in the fight for justice for the *seringueiros*, and in so doing helped to formulate a policy that could save the rain forests for the benefit of all mankind. In the course of this struggle he had to negotiate the sectarianism of the Brazilian left and dodge the guns of the Brazilian right; to manipulate a government-structured union system, while creating a union for the workers. He drew the Indians into the struggle alongside the *seringueiros* – Indians who suffered even greater poverty and oppression, and, of course, racism, and who had been at enmity with the rubber tappers for a century. And he had to pivot between opposing forces in the Catholic Church where, on the one hand, the priest could be an agent of the government's intelligence system and report back on Mendes's union activities in Xapuri: and, on the other, the former archbishop Helder Camara, could say 'why is it that when I give help to the poor they call me a saint, but when I ask why they are poor in the first place, they call me communist?'

Chico Mendes was always concerned to create real grassroots movements which involved more and more people and could thus grow strong. The union in Xapuri started an education programme in

1979, and worked closely with the Projeto Seringueiro (the Rubber Tappers Project) which in addition to 'the promotion of co-operatives . . . recognised that the prime need was to increase rubber tappers' self-confidence and understanding, to enable them to administer the co-operatives without the need for outside project workers'.

He kept resistance non-violent, but as the violence of the UDR (the landowners' Democratic Rural Union) increased, was aware that this tactic might have to be abandoned. Until then, the rubber tappers would use the *empate* (stalemate, stand-off), picketing the forest that is about to be cleared by gathering en masse and trying to dissuade the labourers from going ahead with the work. The women and children stand in the front so that the police do not shoot, and the *empate* often ends in bloody beatings for the rubber tappers.

In the course of the resistance struggle, Mendes and his fellow workers in the National Rubber Council (CNS) worked out alternative development proposals for the Amazon forest. By creating extractive reserves, with land under public ownership, and the fruits of the forest harvested without destruction, the CNS aim to save the rainforest while developing the region's economy and maintaining the freedom of its workers.

The fifteen *empates* that the rubber tappers won have saved 1,200,000 hectares of forest. Before Chico Mendes's death, the CNS had won three extractive reserves, and proposals for more were underway. Mendes was beginning to worry how a reserve would function where the union was not strong. With the number of assassinations increasing, he knew his own death was a likely event, and, though not seeking it, refused to be deterred by the threat. He speaks with pride of those being trained to take over the leadership.

The interview is introduced by Tony Gross, and interspersed with passages that serve both to explain some of Mendes's references, and to contextualise the *seringueiros'* Brazil. For this is a Brazil in debt bondage to the 'developed' world, obliged to plunder her natural resources in an economic relation with Western countries, from which they alone benefit. These passages do not merely serve to fill out the whole into a book, but enrich Chico Mendes's own words and add to our knowledge.

London

ANGELA SHERLOCK

Bananas, Beaches and Bases: making sense of international politics

By CYNTHIA ENLOE (London, Pandora, 1989). 244pp. £8.99

Women are everywhere in the interstices of international politics, writes Cynthia Enloe. We are there propping up the Oliver Norths,

underlining the power of ambassadors, prostituting ourselves for foreign armies, producing the cloth that other women will drape themselves in, even pampering the foreign tourists. And yet our presence has gone unnoticed. And, worse, we women allow the study of international politics to be a male preserve. We must, believes Enloe, begin to ask the feminist questions about international politics, because those questions bring out a whole different set of answers.

She examines tourism, anti-colonial and nationalist movements, military bases abroad, international agencies and diplomacy, the global factory, agribusiness, domestic labour to build up her thesis that 'gender makes the world go round'. And she does this in a highly accessible style – with interviews, anecdotes, fascinating details from individual histories, and facts and figures – which brings a very serious and complex issue alive.

There is no doubt that Enloe is very keen to tell women why and how international politics affects them. The book is littered with ways of engaging their interest and suggestions for campaigns. But so ardent is she in her desire to show how gendered international politics is, that the writing sometimes tips over into the ridiculous. So that 'The banana has a history, a gendered history' and 'risk-taking', she writes, 'has been at the core of the masculinised conception of banking.' Is there then a feminised system of banking? Or is there any banking which does not involve risk-taking?

Another problem is that Enloe never defines international politics. Sometimes she means imperialism, sometimes male-dominated governments. Her examples can appear quite esoteric and subjective as she flits across countries and issues without any clear framework. And most confusing of all is the way she dissolves the boundary between women as literal protagonists in, or victims of, international politics and the symbols and ideas of womanhood used to sell an international relationship – as though there is no conceptual dividing line between them. The banana's gendered existence, for example, begins for Enloe with the Latin American 'fruity' image of Carmen Miranda being sold to the US public via the movie screens of the 1940s. (She is explaining how markets for products – like the banana – are developed by creating in the purchasers' minds a comfortable or exotic female symbol to identify with.) She does the same thing in her chapter on nationalism where she starts a paragraph with the bizarre statement: 'Colonialism was good for the postcard business.'

No doubt Enloe often means to startle and amuse the reader with such statements. But sometimes she appears to believe her own copy-writing – and that is dangerous. She writes: 'Any military base is designed to be secure. By cutting the fences, dancing on the missile silos . . . the Greenham women managed to transform the very meaning of a base, and of public security.' That is fine. But, she carries

on to say: 'A military base easily penetrated by a group of non-violent women was no longer a military base.' Which is a nonsense.

Is this, then, a serious book or a flippant one? Cynthia Enloe is tackling a very serious topic and is serious, too, in her object of taking international relations out of its rarefied, abstracted context and specialist jargon to show women how it affects their everyday lives. And she successfully dethrones the academics, the pundits and the international agency boys. But her populist feminism shades over sometimes into an unfortunate talking down to women. Her determination to view international politics solely through the prism of gender means that she tends to substitute subjective connections and slick over-writing for hard facts and thorough analysis.

Institute of Race Relations

JENNY BOURNE

Têtes de Turcs en France

By FAUSTO GIUDICE (Paris, Editions la Découverte, 1989). 259pp. 95F.

Following the publication in France of his brilliant exposé of the plight of Turkish workers in West Germany, *Tête de Turc*, Günter Wallraff asked a French investigative journalist if the conditions endured by the Turkish community in Germany could conceivably exist in France. The question was taken up by Wallraff's publisher, La Découverte, which launched an inquiry with the aid of immigrants' rights organisations and trade unions. *Têtes de Turcs en France* is the result of that inquiry.

The book, a veritable testimony to what the author bluntly terms 'apartheid à la Française', casts new light on a country that many would hold up as a model of European social democracy, where racism is confined to the extreme Right. What becomes clear beyond any doubt is that, for France's Arab, African and southern European communities, the Le Pen phenomenon is only the icing on the cake; for these 'immigrants' a profound bureaucratic, infrastructural racism is the foremost concern, a fact which is highlighted in the author's examination of the housing situation in Paris. Crude discrimination against 'non-French' housing applicants, in both the private and the public sectors, forces African and Arab families to live in inadequate and squalid accommodation, and, as gentrification sweeps areas formerly more accessible to black families, forced evictions have become widespread. Take, for example, Mr and Mrs Ahmed, who had been living in a single room, measuring twelve square metres, with a communal WC on the landing and who had been assured by their local council that they would be rehoused in two months. Six months

later, still waiting, the couple found themselves being evicted by 150 police officers. The council claimed that the couple had had sufficient time to find alternative accommodation. Riot police (CRS units) have been heavily deployed in other operations to evict black families. In several cases, families had signed an eviction agreement on the condition that they would be rehoused; they have then been dumped in squalid and often dangerous hotel accommodation.

Those who have refused to sign eviction agreements have met more tragic ends. Arson attacks have been carried out in a number of housing blocks almost exclusively occupied by Arab, African and Turkish families. In September 1986, for example, a fire in a housing block in the 20th arrondissement claimed seven lives and wounded seventeen others; two months later, another incident in the same area claimed nine lives. Those lucky enough to survive such attacks have found little sympathy with their local housing authority or, indeed, the city council. Jacques Chirac, the mayor of Paris, made his views clear on this issue: 'Why should tenants with an irregular status benefit from a prioritised treatment on the basis that they are victims while many Parisians have been waiting for a long time to have their housing problems resolved?'

Similar blatant racism holds sway in education. In Montfermeil, a town north of Paris, some black children have been excluded from schools on the pretext that they were new arrivals in the region and that the percentage of 'immigrant' families in the town was already too high. The mayor announced, further, that all children of 'new immigrants' would be equally excluded from schools in the region. Exclusion of 'immigrant' children from schools was also practised by the Communist Party-led council of Clichy-sous-Bois, where parents who had tried to enroll their children were told that there were insufficient places available. After protests from teachers' unions, which pointed out that the pupil-teacher ratio was, in fact, relatively low, the council came to the point: 'When there are too many immigrant children, the quality falls.' For their part, the socialist members of the council proposed the notorious 'bussing' system in order to distribute more evenly the children of immigrant families throughout the region's schools. And only last year France's education system was thrown into turmoil when the principal of a secondary school refused to allow Muslim girls to wear headscarves inside the school. The decision, taken on the pretext that the secularism of the school was under threat, was followed by other schools.

Perhaps the most disturbing revelation in this book concerns the treatment of black women by the health service in the Paris region. According to Giudice, the notorious Depo-Provera long-term contraceptive is still being administered to 'mentally handicapped and . . . immigrant women', and some African women have been sterilised

without their consent while undergoing caesarian sections. A number of hospitals in the Paris region appear to have an unwritten policy of sterilising black women in this way if they are considered to have had a 'sufficient' number of children. A woman who had her Fallopian and Eustachian tubes tied after giving birth to her sixth child was the subject of an inquiry at the hospital where the operation took place. In attempting to defend its action, the hospital stated: 'Her husband is dead and she already has six children. What's the point?' Fearing that they will become the victims of this practice, African women, in particular, are increasingly refusing to agree to caesarian sections; others only admit themselves into hospitals at the very last moment when the birth process is underway.

One major difference between racism in France and in Britain concerns the use of immigrant workers in the agricultural and horticultural industries. Whereas in Britain this is non-existent, in certain areas of the south of France the fields and orchards are often worked almost entirely by north African and southern European 'tourists', a reference to their insecure immigration status. These clandestine workers are the ghosts of pre-Revolution France, toiling in horrifying conditions, poorly equipped, maltreated and under-paid. Mostly Moroccans, they are frequently ordered to carry out dangerous tasks, such as chemical spraying without protective clothing, and commonly work into the night. The case of Abdelkader is typical. An orchard worker responsible for chemical spraying, he was forced to share a small bungalow with numerous other workers and, as if the poor sanitary conditions and the leaking roof were not enough, the electricity was cut every night at 10.30 until 6.30 the following morning. Forbidden to take bank holidays and deprived of holiday pay, Abdelkader finally complained to his boss, who responded with threats, false allegations concerning the quality of his work and finally, after Abdelkader continued to protest, physical assault.

French immigration law is also scrutinised by Giudice, who identifies the manifestly unjust treatment of Algerian immigrants in the Marseille area. Rabah and his wife, married in 1982 and with three children, are victims of an extraordinary practice which forces the couple to live apart six months of the year. Rabah's wife only has the status of a 'tourist' with a 60-day visa. When the visa expires, she is obliged to return to Algeria where she stays for six or seven months, returning to France only when she has obtained a new visa. After sixty days with her husband and children, she is forced to repeat the whole process. In 1983 Rabah applied for permission for his wife to reside permanently in France. The application took three years to process and was finally rejected. The author estimates that between 6,000 and 8,000 families have been affected by this and similar abuses by the immigration authorities in the Marseille area, in spite of government

proclamations in favour of the 'regularisation of immigrants'. But then, as Giudice points out, government concern about 'les droits des étrangers' is one thing and the conduct of the immigration authorities is another. And here he touches on a fundamental point, for if the present French government has made a rapprochement towards the Arab and African communities, the institutions themselves appear to have changed little. Racism has been allowed to perpetuate itself, though sometimes masked by new debates about culture, assimilation, secularism and so on.

The sheer weight of the evidence that Giudice collected stands as an indictment of French society. But this book cannot be read merely in terms of its implications for France alone: 'This "other France" that we have visited and described is a part of France and of Europe. Here the Portuguese build, there the Turks and Moroccans dig and drill, building Europe. But will the politics and economy of Europe be constructed in the image of these builders? The single European market will be a reality in January 1993. Freedom of movement and settlement will be total. Will it be the same for this "third state" that comprises the immigrants and refugees, the non-European minorities? It appears not. A "setting apart" of this other Europe is being carried out.'

Paris

GRAHAM MURRAY

Grenada Morning: a memoir of the revo

By CHRIS SEARLE (London, Karia, 1989). 191pp. £9.95 Cloth, £4.95 paper

Carriacou, a rocky island, thirteen square miles of small villages lived in by fishing and peasant families; an island of dusty potholed roads, dilapidated houses and crumbling jetties; a small sunlit island a few miles north-east of Grenada. What else was it than a threat to world peace when those 6,000 or 7,000 Carriacouans began, like their mainland neighbours, collectively to rebuild those crumbling jetties, repair those houses, tarmac the roads, plant new crops?

The temerity of it – new schools for them? Free health care for them? Dignity? Responsibility for their own futures? Impossible. This was, after all, a 'Soviet Cuban colony being readied as a major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy'. So that when the New Jewel Movement leadership split so bloodily and tragically apart, what could Uncle Sam do except step in to 'protect the innocent', 'end chaos' and 'restore law and order'? Grenada, too, was a 'magnificent piece of real estate' and could be turned into a 'very stable environment for investment'.

That is empire-speak: piety, lies and hypocrisy – except when it comes to business. Whereas the ‘revo’, among all its genuine material achievements, created language of poetic intensity.

When we hear the news of the revolution that morning it was joy come out in the morning! Joy come out in the morning! As if I lifted up that morning! I lifted up above the sky that morning!

(As Searle so sadly notes, even in its death throes the ‘revo’ was coining new words – Bishop’s alleged crime was ‘one-manism’.)

Searle himself had gone to Grenada to help train the teachers so desperately needed for the new society, becoming in the process national coordinator of a highly innovative and successful training programme. He organised, too, its publishing house, Fedon, seeing it as his role to present the truth of the ‘revo’s’ achievements in as many dimensions as possible. This book is a vivid account of that time; of the day-to-day process of building – with such slender resources but an abundance of enthusiasm – a new sort of society from the ground up. But it is more. It is also an attempt to go beyond the pain of that shocking, final betrayal to understand why it came about. ‘The loss of all these brave and brilliant lives, those of Caribbean revolutionaries and patriots, remains an immeasurable waste but a waste that still must not be in vain.’

His delight in and love for the country and the people of Grenada is evident on every page. It is in the pictures he paints of Grenada itself, ‘the hills and green clad precipitous crests of the dividing ridge that had given precious cover to Fedon’s rebels . . . the ferned and rocky overhangs, the cocoa and banana glades, the springing gleaming rivulets and the dense green of cedars and pendulous breadfruit trees’. It is in the thumbnail sketches of colleagues and comrades like the relentlessly energetic budget officer, Bombs; like the young American teacher who learnt to umpire cricket matches; like the Rastafarian bus-driver Lion who hummed and sang calypso as he drove the potholed roads. And it is there in the deeper portraits that emerge of Maurice Bishop, Jackie Creft, Bernard Coard.

What happened to cause that self-destruction is still, at one level, inexplicable. Searle conveys a sense of the warmth and respect which all those involved bore for each other during the making of the ‘revo’. But there were so few people to carry so much weight. And there were signs, portents of something going awry before the final debacle. Returning to Grenada in July 1983 for a short visit, after a nine-months’ absence working back in London, Searle felt ‘a certain detachment from the process which I hadn’t felt before and which I didn’t like. There also seemed a more strained and exhausted ambience.’ The mass organisations of youth and women appeared to have ebbed away. At one parish council meeting ‘there were almost

more foreign tourists than Grenadians, plus a German film-crew'.

Then, one evening in early October, came the news of the critical divisions within the government that led finally to the murder of Bishop and the destruction of the 'revo'; each act unfolding a greater horror. 'Whoever . . . fired the first rounds and whatever their cause, the result was a massacre and a bloody betrayal of everything the revolution had stood for, achieved . . . This was what happened when reconciliation was waived, when structures for conflict resolution . . . [were] seen as unnecessary, when a precious process . . . set aside the principles upon which it had been born.'

Institute of Race Relations

HAZEL WATERS

Spiritual Warfare: the politics of the Christian Right

By SARA DIAMOND (London, Pluto Press, 1989). 292pp. £17.50

For those of us who still tend to associate right-wing Christianity with the paternalistic droning of vapid clerics or rabid barking from self-appointed moral watchdogs, Sara Diamond's exposé of the religious New Right's 'global missionary adventurism' is something of a revelation. Her detailed and extensive survey of the growth and development of this international movement is a political corrective to those others of us too amused by the exploits of the televangelist fraternity to take the religious Right seriously. According to Diamond, such titillation distracts from the other, less amusing, activities of these neo-conservative fundamentalists in their efforts to save the world for the greater glory of capitalism.

Diamond makes it clear that, although there is conflict within the Christian New Right itself, it is united by a dream that the United States (and, by extension, the rest of the world) will be brought under the rule of their god. In this, it is a radical re-statement of relationships and inequalities undermined by the agenda and activities associated with 'liberation theologies'. If the various theologies of liberation are Christian manifestations of the spirit of anti-colonialism and self-determination that swept the Third World after the Second World War, the Christian New Right is the ideological and political anti-thesis. As Diamond shows, the old Christian Right was principally defined by a morality premised upon hellfire and a dark war against the power of atheistic marxists, secular humanists and liberal agnostics. However, in response to the agenda of freedom, justice and communal political activism set by specifically Christian opponents of exploitation and imperialism, the New Christian Right wages the same war, but goes beyond its predecessor by articulating a 'positive' vision of a society under God's control based on distortions of the Old Testa-

ment and biologically ordained differences. Whereas the old type of Evangelical Christianity was individualistic, triumphalist and 'apolitical', its current incarnation is becoming a self-conscious political movement concerned with overturning the 'liberal' aberrations of the 1960s.

Those involved in this mission are not the keepers of the status quo: they are God's revolutionaries, committed to fundamental change by any means necessary. Diamond outlines their successes in strengthening the conservative impulses in American domestic and foreign policy. For instance, vital to the work of mobilising the masses of the 'born again' at home has been the appeal to so-called 'traditional moral values'. And central to this has been an ideology of the family which sanctifies the sexual hypocrisies and prejudices of middle-class America and damns all else. Unlike in the time of Christ, there seems to be no shortage of people only too willing to cast the first stone, terrorise the nearest abortion clinic or assert that AIDS is the judgement of God against gays.

Although the domestic impact of these groups is significant, as evidenced by the increasing role of the religious vote in the election of United States presidents, it is their effect on international affairs that is most disturbing. Region by region, Diamond painstakingly details the hi-tech global crusades against popular opposition to American attempts to re-colonise the Third World. Whether it be in Central America, Southern Africa, the Philippines or Israel, the forces of the Christian New Right are to be found undermining, diverting and informing on progressive movements and organisations that seem to threaten the aims of American foreign policy. Their messianic mission against 'communism' also encourages these Christian imperialists to embrace and offer support to their secular brethren in the holy war against the forces of darkness and annihilation.

Apparently, whereas it only took the death of one innocent person to found Christianity, the modern struggle to cleanse the world of sin demands the sacrifice of millions of people to sustain it.

Birmingham

PAUL GRANT

The Secret Country

By JOHN PILGER (London, Jonathan Cape, 1989). 298pp. £13.95

John Pilger's *The Secret Country* cuts through to the heart of Australia, its history and its people, black and white. Published in the wake of the 1988 Bicentennial celebrations, Pilger's objective is not mawkishly to vindicate his country or add to its macho mythology. What his book does is to enter the uncelebrated places of Australia, to

reveal its stories and to vindicate the tradition of those ‘battlers’ – aborigines and immigrants – upon whose work and culture the nation has authentically developed.

Pilger is a fine writer, clear, witty yet also passionate, and a great part of his achievement in *The Secret Country* is the way he manages to fit so much insight and knowledge into a book of only moderate length.

He begins by describing the lives and struggle of black Australians, the ‘unique survivors’, their stamina and determined fight for land rights. In doing this, he reveals the history of racism and violence they have had to confront since the arrival of the white settlers, with the massacres, the murders, the deaths in custody, the robbery of children, the ‘white Australia’ policies – all of which were conveniently blanked out during the official 1988 celebrations.

His chapters on the lives of the arrivants – the convicts like his own ancestors, the Greeks, Sicilians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Yugoslavs, Czechs, the ‘£10 poms’ and all the human wealth of those who became the twentieth-century Australians – are full of moving testimony.

Much of *The Secret Country* is about recent history – the rise to power and shenanigans of the new millionaire class of ‘Mates’, like Rupert Murdoch, Alan Bond and Kerry Packer, and the cosy relationship they have established with the Bob Hawke ‘Labour’ government. Pilger’s insights on Hawke’s party and government – which he calls the world’s first ‘Thatcherite’ Labour government – are particularly sharp, and stand as a clear and prophetic warning to a possible Kinnock version in Britain.

But it is in the chapter called ‘The Coup’ that we step inside the inner sanctum of Australian politics. Pilger reveals, step by step, the destabilisation and fall of Gough Whitlam’s Labour government in 1975, and the involvement of the CIA and US covert power, which were prepared to take the most drastic of steps to ensure that top-secret US military installations like the nuclear listening post at Pine Gap should not be threatened. A detailed exposition is given about the role of the then Governor General, Sir John Kerr, in the deposing of Whitlam.

The directness and honesty of Pilger’s writing give this book a genuinely historical importance. For, despite his confirmation that the Australian economy and culture is under the slavish overlordship of the US – thanks to ‘good Australians’ like Murdoch, who gave up his Australian passport in the process of making his country’s economy even more servile to that of the US – Pilger also affirms his commitment to his people, their cosmopolitan energy and history of struggle.

As he declares in the last lines of this memorable book, ‘for us, like everyone, breaking free is the only future’.

Music of the Common Tongue: survival and celebration in Afro-American music

By CHRISTOPHER SMALL (London, John Calder, 1989). 495pp.

Christopher Small has written a magnificent book about Afro-American music and its impact on western culture. He totally fulfils his aim of showing that black American music has become of far greater human significance than any superficial assessment or classically orientated evaluation would allow. The book opens with the splendid directive: 'The first thing we must understand about the Africans who were taken into slavery in the Americas is that they were by no means members of a primitive society.' Small goes on to affirm, with musicological and historical insight, that African culture survived in slave music, infusing the spirituals with not just African musical qualities but with the unity, integrity and inner consistency of that continent's communal attitudes.

Afro-American music was a new music, born of the African impulse to survive and live in as much creative harmony with the environment as possible – and that meant adapting and using whatever seemed relevant in the Euro-American musical and cultural tradition. That the acculturation that happened was part of a two-way process, Christopher Small has no doubt. He stresses that there was an ongoing and complex process of interaction in which aspects of white culture passed into the slaves' repertoire and became 'Africanised', while black cultural practices became an unacknowledged part of white culture. More than once in this brilliant book, Small stresses that it is through making music that people introduce order into their existence and 'explore and celebrate their sense of who they are'. It is through making music that not only are corporate and individual identities asserted but that communities thrive as well as survive.

This is a work that is both thoroughly researched and full of original insights. The course of Afro-American music is traced from Africa, through its interaction with the European classical tradition in that most cosmopolitan of cities, New Orleans, to its full stature as an American art form. The patterns created by the spirituals and gospel, by blues and jazz are described in clear, comprehensible musical terms and analysed with rare perception and a fresh vision. The book is thoughtful and thought-provoking in the lucid density of its information and ideas.

Throughout, it is emphasised that the essence of music lies not in composition but in performance. The vitality of the Afro-American tradition owes much to its concentration on improvisation and Small carefully explains how minor variations by a musician with the kind of creative genius wielded by Charlie Parker or Count Basie could dramatically alter the mood and the impact of any piece of live or re-

corded music. He coins a new word – musiking – to describe the fundamental act of making music. Small recognises the true function of a musician like an American blues singer as identifying and exploring the destructive aspects of American society and then using the music to integrate the common experiences of the black community in the unifying ritual of blues.

He concludes this superb book by ascribing the widespread appeal of this music, that is derived from Africa and led to the creation of rock and roll, to a concern about identity. In his view, black music has always created a harmony between the needs of each person and those of the community. This harmony is, he feels, desperately needed by modern industrial societies and black music is a medium through which people can explore and affirm their humanity and communality as well as express their own unique needs. This is an enriching book that leads to a genuine enhancement of understanding. It is written with passion and eloquence and is fired by the persuasive conviction that Afro-American music and its progeny have long ago transcended the role of mere entertainment and become tools for true liberation.

University of Keele

MARY ELLISON

The School Effect: a study of multi-racial comprehensives

By DAVID J. SMITH and SALLY TOMLINSON (London, Policy Studies Institute, 1989). 325pp. £24.95

The School Effect has been hailed by some as a profound and in-depth report on racism in secondary schools. It is no such thing. For the right-wing it is seen as a slap in the face to anti-racists and a vindication of their views. It is not that either – though the authors have left themselves open to that sort of interpretation.

In examining the effect that schools have on the educational development of children, the book comes to the same (surely commonsense) conclusion that any parent would – that children, whatever their race, background or ability, do better in ‘good’ schools than ‘bad’. The study followed the careers of pupils in twenty multi-racial comprehensives from the ages of 11 to 16 and looked not at the actual results they achieved but at the progress they made. Schools are compared that are widely different in terms of the attainment and social background of the pupils – but whatever the ‘status’ of the school, some help children progress more than others. For instance, in a much quoted (and damning) comment on our education system, the authors find that the same child would get a CSE grade 3 in English at one school but an O level grade B in another. This is true for black children as well as white. Of course,

racism, which places black families amongst the lowest social groups, means that black children often begin school at a disadvantage. The report does not deny this, nor does it claim that schools will level differences – whether they be because of racism or social class. It claims merely that in ‘good’ schools children, regardless of their colour, will progress better than in ‘bad’ ones.

As far as it goes, this is fine. The report confirms commonsense: if the school is ‘good’, then this is a more important factor in the progress of the pupil than whether the child is black or white. But this begs the crucial question of what makes a good school? Is it, as evidence suggests, where anti-racism has been woven into the daily life of the school alongside all the other things that go to make a school successful? This, the authors admit, is outside their brief. Nonetheless, they manage to convey the impression that racism and tackling it is not particularly important in the education of black children. They ignore the continuing history of complaints and campaigns by black parents, as well as aspects of their own report which point a different way. Even to this reader – unfamiliar with survey techniques and batteries of tables – some questions leap from the pages. Bangladeshi boys, for example, obtain some of the worst results from the education system, yet of the twenty schools in the study, none had a high proportion of them. (In fact, most of the Bangladeshi children in the study are concentrated in one girls only school – hardly representative for a study so concerned with multiracial comprehensives.) Afro-Caribbean children, too, whose parents are also over-represented in terms of unemployment, low-skilled work, etc., are under-represented in the survey overall – no school here has a high proportion of Afro-Caribbean pupils.

In places, there are echoes of the classic stereotypes that have labelled black children since their first days in the schools of this country. According to teacher responses, for example, West Indian children are more likely to show behavioural problems than white; South Asian children less likely. Children of West Indian origin receive ‘distinctly more’ criticism than those originating from the UK and ‘much more’ than children of South Asian origin. South Asian children receive both less praise and less blame than other groups, indicating that they receive less attention from teachers altogether. They also participate in school activities less and their parents have less contact with the school than other parents. The proportion of Bangladeshi children doing history, geography, physics and computing is low, but is high in both typing and textiles. Their over-representation in this craft subject is explained as being to do with their ‘cultural tradition’. All of these things merit further investigation, and they point to the ways racism may work in a school, ways which are difficult to measure in this sort of study.

One of the most striking things the report reveals is the massive class divide in our schools. What children achieve in the education system is an alarming reflection of the wider society. 'Children from professional and managerial families obtained nearly *eight times* as many higher grade passes as those from families belonging to the "underclass" (emphasis added)' – but hardly any of the Afro-Caribbean families belonged to such professional and managerial groups. And a shocking 64 per cent of the Bangladeshi children came from families where neither parent was even in work. Such deathly combinations of racism and poverty must gravely damage the educational development of even the most naturally gifted child.


The proportion of people leaving school in Britain who have attained a modest standard of basic skills is lower than in other European countries. But the proportion obtaining a much higher skill (often through private schooling) is at least as high, if not higher than elsewhere in Europe. In other words, Britain is much better at educating its elite than the mass of its people. This report bears witness to that.

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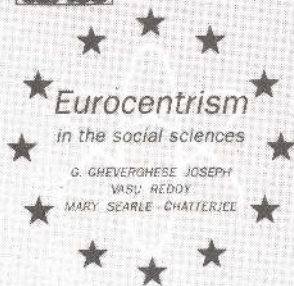
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