RACE & CLASS

ARABICIDE

The Chattisgarh Liberation Movement

Colonial workers in France

Politics of immigration

UK: BLACK CHILDREN AT RISK • RUSSIA: THE PRESS AND AFRICA

James Boggs
1919–1993

I met James Boggs just once, late in his life, but I had known him a long time – in his writings and in his fightings, through his *The American Revolution: pages from a Negro Worker's notebook* and *Racism and the Class Struggle* and *Revolution and Evolution* (co-authored with Grace Lee, his life-long comrade, wife and friend) and through his activities, as a Detroit autoworker, in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the Black Power movement.

But most of all I knew him, as we marxists once knew each other, across times and spaces and ages, as a comrade-in-arms, against the invasive forces of race and capital and empire. I knew him more closely, as I began to edit this journal, as one who, like us, saw that while the struggle against racism could not be subsumed to the class struggle, it could not, in the name of that autonomy, become separatist, inward-looking or nationalist either. 'A black consciousness which does not develop into a real and realistic attack on the causes of black oppression', he wrote, 'can only become ... a breeding ground for cultism, adventurism and opportunism...'

He saw too, long before the rest of us, that the onset of the technological revolution was going to bring about such cataclysmic changes in the whole of society, indeed in the whole world order, that we would need to build socialism anew, afresh, from the ground up – armed only with the belief that 'the highest expression of human creativity' was the 'unending struggle to become more profoundly human'.

He wrote, as he himself said, not for all time, but for our time. But because, in every single thing he wrote, he was seeking, in Fanon's indomitable phrase, 'the universality inherent in the human condition', his writings will long remain a conscience and a guide.

He was that rare and miraculous combination: a working-class organiser and an organic intellectual.

A. Sivanandan

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Death of a socialist: the Chattisgarh Liberation Movement*

Bhilai, in Chattisgarh, the poorest part of the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, is the site of the largest steel plant in Asia. Together with its ancillary industries, it employs 100,000 people. The plant is now thirty-three years old, a Soviet-Indian collaboration, which sends its pollution over the countryside, blighting the tamarind trees on the Raipur-Bhilai road, and filtering the sun through a perpetual human-made cloud. The core workers of Bhilai have regular employment, but for those on the periphery, and in the private industries that support the vast steel facility, work is casualised, dangerous and ill-paid: factories where women are locked in for the night so that they cannot even use the urinal; opencast iron-ore mines where, when a worker is killed under a rockfall, the first concern of the owners is to cover up the death to avoid even minimal compensation. The people of Chattisgarh are primarily tribals and untouchables. They remain poor in a part of India that has some of the country's richest resources – iron ore, dolomite, coal, copper, uranium, as well as forests of teak, sal, mahua and tendu.

The workers of the Bhilai plant were organised originally by AITUC, the union of the Communist Party of India; but it was indifferent to the conditions of the casual workers, who form a majority of the labour force.

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*Chapter from *Victims of Development* by Jeremy Seabrook (London, Verso, forthcoming).

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Shankar Guha Niyogi came to Bhilai from West Bengal in 1961. He joined the steel plant as an engineering apprentice. While working, and studying for his BSc, he founded the Blast Furnaces Action Committee. As an engineer, he knew how to bring the whole plant to a standstill, and was dismissed in 1967 on security grounds. He went to Bastar, a tribal area of Madhya Pradesh, and worked in the fields, grazing cattle, and selling them for meat in the city, by-passing profiteering middlemen and earning for the tribal people a decent livelihood. He later worked in the dolomite mines, where he married one of his co-workers, a tribal woman whom he called Asha, Hope.

During Mrs Gandhi's Emergency, in the mid-1970s, he was arrested and spent thirteen months in jail because of the newspaper he had started in Bastar. At that time, many workers had broken away from the Communist Party union and had formed what is now the Chattisgarh Mines Sharmik Sangh, the union identified with Niyogi. In 1976, he came to Dalli Rajhara, to the iron-ore mines, where the workers were being paid Rs3.50 a day. In the early period, the union doubled the wages, but Niyogi was dismayed to find that, in spite of the monetary achievements, the living conditions of the miners and their families had not improved. Much of the increased wages was going to the liquor shops. The next campaign was to reduce the consumption of liquor and the profits of the liquor-lords. This was the first time that a trade union in India had allied itself with social reform in this way. The women were the principal players in the liquor campaign. It brought Niyogi into conflict with the liquor mafia, which also had its connections with politicians. So not only the contractors who cheated the casual labourers, but also the management of Bhilai and the liquor barons and politicians were added to his list of enemies.

For thirty years Niyogi fought for the social and economic uplifting of the oppressed and exploited people of Chattisgarh. From the mid-1970s, he evolved his vision of an alternative to the existing system, that would avoid enslavement to technology, halt ecological ruin and exploitative work, elevate the status of women, and devise appropriate means of enhancing rather than supplanting human labour. The movement went beyond the work of conventional trade unionism, and embraced those released from bonded labour, slumdwellers of Raipur, farmers, workers in the nearby cotton mills, child workers, women deserted, beaten or abused for the sake of dowry. Several hundred thousand people became part of the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha (the Chattisgarh Liberation Front) and, today, the red-green flag is flying all over the region.

The flag dominates the town of Rajhara, where the earth has the highest iron content of any in India. The dust has turned the rivers red, and transformed the trees into rusty metal sculptures. A perpetual *khamsin* of rusty powder is stirred up on the terraces of the denuded

hills, from which the trucks and trains swiftly remove the rich ore from the place where it is produced. The machinery for extracting its wealth efficiently is reminiscent of the Rhondda Valley in the late nineteenth century.

Rajhara is a frontier town of about 100,000 people; buildings chaotic and improvised, shacks, slums, cheap hotels, vendors and cart-pullers, ox-carts, and buses with people clinging to the sides and sitting on the roof. At the end of the day, the miners are going home, faces and clothes stained with the rusty element of their labour. The wages of miners have now reached Rs80 a day, the highest in India. They pause to buy tomatoes and aubergines, peas and cauliflower from the vegetable vendors on the dusty margin of the road; sweet Nagpur oranges and claws of ripe bananas. None of these things were within their reach fifteen years ago. Now, their houses are improved, clean and tiled, the wretched hutments have been swept away. Everything speaks of a dignified sufficiency.

Tonight, however, there is tension, a suppressed energy in the air. This is Republic Day weekend, and tomorrow, all over Chattisgarh, there will be marches and demonstrations of the red-green movement: a protest against the inertia of the authorities in tracing those who, on 28 September last year, murdered Niyogi in the modest hut where he slept, by firing six bullets through the open window.

The previous evening around midnight, he had left his friend, Rajendra Sail, human rights worker with the Raipur Churches Development and Relief Committee. Sail had asked him to stay, for it was common knowledge that Niyogi's life was at risk. A few days earlier, Niyogi had met the President of India and, speaking to him of the repression and retrenchment in Chattisgarh, had said, 'Do the people have to use AK rifles before anyone will listen to them?'

There had been warnings of a conspiracy against Niyogi. An anonymous letter from a well-wisher in Bhilai had been handed to the police in Rajhara in April 1991. No action was taken. Three months later, a second letter was received, with the warning that it would happen soon. All had been finalised. The name of the killer was known, as were some of the influential individuals involved in the conspiracy. This letter was also handed to the police, with a covering letter from the union office. No action was taken. After the assassination, the police issued a statement saying they did not know his life was under threat. The Criminal Bureau of Investigation, the highest investigative authority in India, has implicated some of the leading industrialists, liquor-lords and politicians of Madhya Pradesh. The face of the actual assassin is on posters, a hired killer called Paltan Mallah. A reward is offered for information as to his whereabouts. He is probably dead by now, eliminated by those who hired him, so that the chain linking him to the powerful is broken.

Rajendra Sail came to Raipur in 1977, as a civil liberties activist. 'I was interested in investigating this question of what development with social justice is. And I saw these ideas transformed into living experiments by a marxist. But, of course, he was never a traditional ideologue. He was a mixture of Gandhi, Marx, Mao; he believed in openness, flexibility, experimentation.

'I went to look at the mining areas to see for myself. The first thing you notice whenever you go to mining areas in India is the children who will gather round as soon as a stranger comes. And they are always pot-bellied, with runny noses, dry hair, wearing only ragged pants or nude. Here, the first thing that struck me was that the children were different. If they were not wearing clothes, this was because they did not want to wear them. They looked healthy and clean, their hair was combed and oiled. They were all going to school as well. Indeed, government schools which had no teachers – because teachers will not come to such areas – were being supplied with teachers by the union. Another thing: when you go to the mining areas, you will see that women wear no petticoat – just a sari wrapped around their body. Here, they were wearing blouse and petticoat and chappals. Their hair was clean and combed, and they wore jewellery. The men also looked cleaner. They were not in the teashops and liquor shops. The people's houses were not very good, but they were clean; not shanties, but huts with tiled roofs and kitchen gardens. I talked to the women about the anti-liquor campaign. What difference had it made? They said, "Earlier, we did not know what we would eat or when. Now we eat when we want to." That is a powerful statement. They showed us they had rations stored for ten days.

'Then we went to the shopkeepers. Is the story of the success of the anti-liquor campaign true? Yes. How do you know? We had a lot of debt, but now that has been reduced. If there is a defaulter, we go to the trade union offices, and report to Niyogi; he'll pay the money from the union, or he'll get the defaulter to pay us directly. Money is now spent on food and clothes.

'Then we went to the banks. They said, "We now have small savings accounts, from Rs300 to Rs3,000." The workers told their own stories. Most had come from the neighbouring areas. At the Bhilai Steel Plant, there were then 72,000 workers. Less than 10 per cent of them came from Chattisgarh. This was a big issue: employment through industrialisation had been the promise to Chattisgarh; but the industries had brought in all their key personnel from outside. Most Chattisgarhis were working as manual mineworkers or contract labourers. They stood to lose most if the mines were mechanised. They had been able to reclaim land that had been mortgaged, or had purchased small plots of land for themselves and their families.'

Niyogi attracted a number of scientists who worked on a semi-

mechanisation programme, not mechanisation that would throw people out of work. The balance between technology and human energy must be right in India. The Steel Authority of India accepted this scheme. But now, once more, with the new economic policy, pressures for increased mechanisation are intensifying again.

The Chattisgarh Movement has always been non-violent. Inspired, in this respect, by Gandhi, Niyogi created a movement, open, without exclusions or limits, which integrated the work, social and cultural lives of the people. A fierce solidarity was forged here, of a kind that has become all but extinct in the West. One of the proudest monuments is the hospital, built by the labour of the workers of Rajhara, staffed by committed doctors and nurses, and serving all the people of the surrounding areas. Next door to the hospital are the union offices. The union hall has been turned into a shrine to Niyogi. His portrait and his chair have been garlanded with marigolds and strewn with crimson rose petals. Workers come in small groups each day, and stand in silence in front of the light that burns in the shrine.

On the walls of the union office are the shoes and work-tools of those killed in the first police shootings at Rajhara on 2 and 3 June 1977. Eleven people died at that time, including a pregnant woman and a teenage boy. There have been other shootings, against agitating workers, against people protesting at the molestation of a woman by a member of the Central Industrial Security Force, while she was picking firewood. In 1984, police opened fire when Niyogi formed the Bagal Nagpur Cotton Mills Union. This is in fact the oldest industry in Chattisgarh; it had seen the first trade union in the area, formed by Thakur Pyare Lal Singh, advocate and freedom fighter. It was here, for the first time in India, that police opened fire against striking workers in 1924; the first death was that of a tribal, Jaharu Gond.

Chattisgarh, however, had had its martyrs long before then. In 1856-7, Veer Narayan Singh mobilised peasants in the interior forest area at a time of a great drought. When landlords refused to open their granaries, he went with an army of tribal people to loot them, promising that they would return what they had taken in a better season. He was hanged by the British in 1857.

On the day before Republic Day, the police presence around Bhilai and the surrounding towns is concentrated. They are turning back people arriving in buses, trucks, cars and even on motorcycles for the march. In spite of this, 25,000 people are on the streets of the city, with about 6,000 in Rajhara. They walk through the towns and industrial villages in dignified solemn silence, exhibiting the discipline and restraint which even the industrialists of Bhilai concede was one of Niyogi's greatest contributions to the productivity of their factories. The women carry the implements of their labour, with food and water tins on their head, a barefoot procession of injured humanity, setting

in movement plumes of rust-coloured dust, so that they appear to be walking in the clouds. The people at the roadside observe them with respect and sympathy.

Attempts by the industrialists to exclude, damage or smear Niyogi had been consistent over fifteen years. They had used all means, legal and illegal, to silence him. In 1990, they had used the Externment Act against him. He was externed from five districts in Chattisgarh. This was a British Act (known as the Bombay Act), used against freedom fighters, who were harassed by being excluded from certain districts. The Act was first used against Thakur Lal Singh, who was forbidden to enter the mill area, but because the railway station was not then legally part of the state where it was located, he would come by train and hold his meetings on the station platform at Ratnandgaon. But the Act had never been used before to extern anyone from *five* districts. Of course, the Internal Security Act also exists now. This was intended for use against hardened criminals, but it is used increasingly against social and trade union activists. Rajendra Sail says, 'We filed a writ petition, and the High Court granted a stay. In the notice served by the state government on Niyogi in the externment proceedings, it said that "As part of a large-scale destabilisation plan of the movement, he married a tribal girl and named her Asha, in order to win the hearts of the workers." He had been accused of many crimes, including attempted murder. He had been in jail many times. For two months early in 1991, he was imprisoned for failing to appear before various criminal courts, and his bail was cancelled. Until that time, the courts were giving him leave of absence. And while he was in prison then, one of the big industrialists implicated in the case had used his absence to enter into an agreement with AITUC to replace Niyogi's union, which was then on strike. The company placed advertisements in the paper, urging the workers to return to work, promising them many benefits. They did not go back.'

Finally, the High Court of Madhya Pradesh released Niyogi and, commenting on the order, the judge said, 'It is an injustice to keep a well-known labour leader behind bars on such grounds. He is working for the downtrodden sections of the people.' He was shown in the reports as 'absconding', in one case, on the day when he was actually meeting the prime minister. It was after this that the externment proceedings were initiated. People had tried to prevent him from coming to Bhilai in the first place; then they tried to throw him out. When that failed, they killed him. Rajendra Sail says, 'After the failure of the externment attempt, I said to him, "What next? The government's attempt to throw you out has failed." He said, "There is no other way but bullets."'

* * *

I was able to meet many of the beneficiaries of Niyogi's work in the Chattisgarh region. He had been supported by a number of non-government organisations, notably the Raipur Churches Development and Relief Committee (RCDRC) in Raipur. Chattisgarh has seen the highest number of bonded labourers ever released from bondage at any one time in India: after a Supreme Court ruling in 1988, almost 5,000 were freed in Chattisgarh. Many of them immediately became members of Niyogi's union.

The system of bonded labour in Chattisgarh was called the *kamia* system. The *kamia* is the adult male labourer. The wife of a *kamia* is a *kamiana;* a teenager a *katia*, a child a *pejolis*. Although the Bonded Labour Abolition Act was passed in 1976, there are an estimated five million still in bondage in the country. The Act defines and describes various forms of bonded labour. There are four criteria in determining bonded labour: (1) that the individual has taken a loan or advance; (2) in return for that loan, his or her labour has been mortgaged; (3) he or she is not free to go and work elsewhere until that loan is repaid; (4) he or she receives less than the minimum wage, or no wage at all.

Under each or any of these conditions, a person is bonded labour. In Raipur district, 6,000 have now been released. Government officials who came here originally reported that there was no bonded labour. Social workers and activists drew up a petition in 1983, naming 683 labourers, who were then released under an order of the Supreme Court. In 1988, a further petition to the Supreme Court was followed by the mass release of more than 4,000 people.

A unique feature of Raipur has been the rehabilitation of the affected people, some of whom had inherited their bondage from a father, or even a grandfather. Rajinder Sail says, 'We have combined struggle on the streets with action in the courts; including *dharnas* in Delhi and Bhopal. Most rehabilitation has hitherto been a partial or total failure. After their release, many people had no alternative means of survival. Here, nearly all have found employment. The pressure has come from below, from people's own power and strength. Membership of the union has given a powerful thrust to their campaign. The scope for corruption in the rehabilitation has been cut to a minimum. We kept a diary of corruption, and the money has been, in many cases, returned to the cheated labourers by the corrupt officials. The scope for corruption is there, because the government allows a monetary sum to be paid for rehabilitation purposes (Rs6,250 – about $250).'

RCDRC submitted a scheme to the Supreme Court, which then requested the government to give it freedom to experiment. RCDRC has trained 472 former bonded labourers, some of whom have gone to school for the first time. Multipurpose polytechnics have been established all over Chattisgarh, where the released people are given training and technical skills, in economic activities that will provide a

livelihood. The people spend six months at the polytechnics. The rehabilitation money is an ex-gratia payment of Rs500, and Rs5,750 for bullocks or land development. Each is also guaranteed a place to live. 'We fought for that. If the labourer was living in a house belonging to the landlord, he could not be turned out. It is a condition that anything mortgaged shall revert to the labourer. There are also facilities available under the rural employment programme and government anti-poverty scheme, so they can benefit in a number of ways.'

But this is the first time in India where former bonded labourers have been unionised. The union is organised by representatives, 280 of them, each representing twenty people – 5,600 people. 'We are often asked what they have gained. We have tried to make the dream come true of giving a voice to the voiceless, hope to the hopeless, power to the powerless.'

A dozen or so representatives have come to Raipur from the surrounding areas for a course at the RCDRC centre. Some of them had never seen a railway before their release; had rarely left the land of their owner. Some had been in bondage for three generations, simply because their grandfather had taken a loan of Rs200 fifty years ago. 'People have said that those seeking release from bondage are only looking for the rehabilitation money', says Rajendra Sail. 'But the hunger for freedom is greater than the greed for money.'

Some of the people were paid only two *tamis* of rice a day; that is 1½ kg of rice. Value is measured here in rice: 20 *tamis* make one *khandi;* 12 *khandis* is equal to about Rs400 (about $15). Some of the bonded labourers were given a small piece of land by the landlord to cultivate their own produce, but they were always given the worst land; then, when they had cleared and improved it, made it yield, the landlord would take it away and send them to some other piece of worthless or degraded land.

'If you do something wrong,' says Hemsingh, a former bonded labourer, 'you may be fined out of the produce you have grown. If you are absent, even for a day, for sickness or a family celebration, you must send a substitute to do your work. If you don't, the landlord will have to hire someone who is not bonded and pay at the rate of a free labourer, which is 5 *tamis* a day; and the bonded labourer will have to repay the landlord those 5 *tamis*. The landlord also has the first option on the wife's labour and, if he says so, she must give half a day's labour free. Whenever the master calls, the labourer must be available, from the early hours of the morning till late in the night.'

The people tell how their ancestors used to live in symbiotic subsistence with the forest. They built their own houses, and depended on the forest for a livelihood. When the forests were felled, the people could no longer survive in the traditional way, and were then forced to take loans and enter bondage. Once this happens, they will never be

free again. The landlords had sold the forests for timber; and that resource having been exhausted, they turned the people into slaves.

Sudhu Ram tells how, at 18, he took over his father's bondage. He studied until the third standard (age 9), and then worked looking after the cattle. During the cultivating season, he had to bathe the animals and feed them while the adults were occupied in the fields. His sister was at the beck and call of the mistress, washing utensils from early morning till midday, then returning at 2pm until sunset. They would eat two meals a day – *pasia*, which was the cooked leftover rice mixed with water and left to ferment; and then, at midday only chappati and roti, with rice and dal in the evening.

If the *kamia* ran away, even to a distance of 25-30km, the landlord would find him. If he was found to have been employed as free labour by anyone else, a traditional court hearing would be held, and the new employer – if it could be established that he had knowingly employed a bonded man – would be punished. If there was no work in the house of the landlord, he would send the *kamia* to another farm, and the wages earned there, at free rates, would go to the master. Even if government work was available, the wages would still go to the landlord.

'Even free labourers got only 4 or 5 *tamis* of rice, so they were not much better off', says Daya Ram. The landlords used to describe the relationship with their labourers in lyrical terms, as a homely and beautiful understanding. 'If I throw him out,' they would say, 'he would die of hunger. We, too, are poor. We could not survive without bonded labour. With us, they have work all the year. If they were free, work would be only seasonal, and they would starve when there is no work.'

'When we tried to become free,' says Hemsingh, 'they said we were disturbing the peace. When the People's Union for Civil Liberties filed writs in the court, they were accused of destabilising the countryside. It was said that they were financed by "foreign money"; they were trying to "make conversions to Christianity".'

Hemsingh remembers how, when he was a child, he would watch the landlord beat his father for any small wrongdoing. Work never ceased: ploughing, sowing, carrying mud on their heads, building, clearing stones; while women had to fetch wood from the forest, cook, bring water. When we asked Hemsingh what was the difference between being in bondage and being free, he said, 'Now I am happy, because I work when I want to. In bondage, you are only paying off the interest on the loan. You never get to pay any of the principal, and that is how you remain chained.'

Reshambai tells how her husband was a *kamia*, who worked from before dawn till eight at night. One day he fell sick. The landlord came to the house and said, 'Why is he not at work?' 'He is sick.' 'Then you come.' Reshambai went in his place. They gave her a hoe to dig earth,

and maintain the irrigation channels. 'I did man's work; compost, looking after the animals. When I came home, I had to work, feed the cattle. We were afraid of being released at first. The landlord threatened he would throw us out, and since we knew nothing else, we did not know what would become of us. We could see only that there would be no work or wages. For one year I worked in place of my husband. Then he was released in May 1988 and was trained as a cycle repair man. He fell ill again and I took him to hospital. I had to sell our utensils, everything that had been bought with the rehabilitation money. We had no land; four of our children work in the fields as day labourers; three others are in school.'

Daya Ram learned tailoring when he was released after eight years in bondage. He had become indebted for Rs400 and 8 *khandi* of *padi*. Now he is earning Rs15-20 a day. He makes and stitches shirts, pants, blouses, sarees, underwear. He has been able to buy a watch with his earnings. He is also building his house. With the rehabilitation money, he bought a pair of bullocks. For his sister's wedding, he took a loan of Rs2,000, but now has the means to pay it back. He has bought brass utensils worth Rs450. Although he is landless, his grandmother has two acres of land, which are farmed by five brothers. He says, 'I now work in my own time, I have no fear that the landlord will come and drag me out of bed. Work was a burden to me, but it no longer is.'

Some of the released labourers have occupied government land, where they can build houses and grow basic foodstuffs for their own consumption; mostly small plots of about one acre. Much of this land had been barren and unproductive. Kanto share-crops one acre, which yields 20-25 bags of *padi* each season (one bag is 75kg, half rice, half husks). He has one pair of bullocks, which he bought with the rehabilitation money. He cannot remember when he became a *kamia*.

Meghnath has taken over 2.5 acres of government land. He is now struggling to gain the titles to this land which he has brought into productive use. Some released labourers were given the deeds to land, but they were not told where the land is, so they cannot use it. The issue of land rights is the next phase of the union struggle. Otherwise useless forest or revenue land can provide them with the space to farm to provide themselves with basic security. They say '*Zamin ka faisla zamin per hoga*' – the decision of the land will be made on the land itself; what they mean is, there is no point in going through the courts, because that will go on for ever.

In spite of the record of Chattisgarh, there are still people in the region in bondage. Government officials come, they are bribed by the landlords, and they go away to report that bondage has been eliminated here.

* * *

Raipur is one of the major cities of Madhya Pradesh and has the chaotic vigour of any fast-growing city. Its development has been accelerated by its proximity to Bhilai: the conurbation draws people from all over the drought-prone and degraded areas of central India.

A 1981 survey showed that there were eighty-seven slum areas in Raipur. Five years later, there were 146 slums and, by 1992, well over 200. The formation of slums is overwhelmingly because of migrations of people from Orissa, which is the next state to Madhya Pradesh and second only to Bihar in its poverty. There has also been continuous migration from rural Chattisgarh. In Madhya Pradesh, the administration which preceded the present BJP legalised the landholdings of people in cities. This was, on paper, a very radical act. It says that a 50 square metre piece of land should be regularised in favour of the landholder. Such landholders were to be given *patta*, land-deeds, on a 30-year lease, and this was to be done irrespective of the claimed ownership of the site occupied.

In Raipur there had been wholesale demolitions and evictions in 1982-3, following which a number of slumdwellers' organisations came into existence and these joined to form the Citizens' Rights Forum. These groups filed a writ petition in the High Court, with the result that a stay was granted in May 1983, effectively halting demolitions. The stay is still in force, but the case is still going on nine years later. The slumdwellers are not hopeful that the decision will ultimately be in their favour. Alternative sites and rehabilitations have been promised, but this means, as the evictees from dams, slums and forests have learned, inadequate, barren land, without amenities, transport or livelihood. Secondly, the work of the slumdwellers demands that they should remain on their present sites for the sake of the jobs they do. The People's Union for Civil Liberties is now arguing that the right to livelihood and the right to shelter are also basic human rights. Since India claims to operate a 'welfare state', it is the duty of such a state to supply housing, welfare and basic facilities. As the state has failed to provide any of these necessities, the state is not entitled to take them away from people who have provided them for themselves.

Nothing has been given by government. The people have worked on their own initiative, mobilised their own money, by mortgaging utensils or wedding jewellery to raise Rs500-1,000, and they will sit by the roadside, earning honestly the money to ensure a living for themselves and their children. Then the government says they are an obstruction and a public nuisance. 'How do they become public?' asks Rajendra Sail. 'Who is the public? The argument in our petition is raising the question, do I have a right to sleep on the railway platform if the state cannot provide for me and I cannot provide for myself? The right to life overtakes all other rights. And right to life means life in all its fullness, it is not the life of an insect. The right to life is enshrined in

part II of the Constitution of India.

'In 1986-7, in spite of the Act being in force that legalised the holding of the occupant of the land, what happened? I was arrested on false and flimsy charges, for obstructing government officials, abusing and threatening to kill them, because I had been opposing demolitions and the uprooting of people.

'I was bailed out, but it wasn't until 1990 that I was acquitted. We decided to fight the case. They had seventeen government officials as witnesses and the deputy superintendent of police. What they are doing now is instigating criminal cases against social activists and civil liberties workers. This taints them with being common criminals. It is an abuse of the law, and also a godsend to real criminals, both those who endanger other people's lives and corporate and industrial criminals. The tactic is one of constant harassment and is very time-consuming. Some people may have to spend 50-100 days a year in court, so their work is effectively immobilised. Some activists have 30-35 cases against them, just as Niyogi had.'

India has much legislation protecting juveniles, the rights of workers, bonded labour, but these Acts are only implemented when there is agitation from below. Only when people are aware and organised can they begin to claim what is theirs by right.

'We have the Madhya Pradesh Slum Development Board funded by the World Bank. Kashiramnagar was an improvement under the aegis of the World Bank. Relocation affects the lives of people in ways that do not enter the calculations of the World Bank. What do they know of the consequences of their "improvements"? None of their experts or officials ever has to live there. The houses they built were fine, but they disrupted the lives of the people. It doesn't look like a slum now, but the women are the worst affected because they now have long journeys before they can continue their livelihood. You take a *bidi*-roller. When she lived close to the place which is the source of her work-materials, she could earn maybe Rs8 for an 8-hour day. Now she has moved 5 kilometres from there to where there is no public transport. So what happens? She must travel a long distance on foot. If she does not reach the *bidi* factory on time, she does not get her raw material; if she returns the work too late, they will not accept her quota, because their day's quota has already been filled. She may take a rickshaw part of the way to get there more quickly; two rupees each way – that is half of her day's earnings gone.

'Other women are working as vegetable vendors in residential colonies. They now have to return home on foot late at night. There is the risk of rape, abductions. They are afraid. We conducted a survey in Kashiramnagar; all the girls under 8 had stopped going to school in the families who had been relocated. Even half the older girls had dropped out, because of the insecurity of walking. Boys can cycle; but the

impediment to the girls' schooling, together with apathy of parents towards the education of girls, discourages them completely.

'The fruit and vegetable vendors get a loan of Rs300 a day. The loan is actually Rs250, but they are charged Rs300 as that is the lender's commission. If she sells it all, she can earn Rs25 a day. When she has moved away from the vegetable market, the dealers will say, "We don't know where you live, how do we know you will come back in the evening?" And then, in Kashiramnagar, all the able-bodied people are away in the daytime. The whole community remains insecure for young girls and old people. There are break-ins and molestations; such things had been unthinkable in the slum.

'The World Bank development had provided a public toilet. They were charging 25 paise a time for upkeep and maintenance. In a family of four, that is one rupee a time, several times a day. That means spending a significant portion of the day's income to perform natural functions. Men and women would go to the fields; but of course there are no fields around Kashiramnagar, so that is a matter of some difficulty. The people have no option but to use the ground around the residential colonies. So the people who lived there started throwing stones at them. The women's organisation met the Collector. "You cannot charge people for this." The Collector didn't know. He reduced the charge to 10 paise a time. That is still unfair. The Mahila Chattisgarh Jagriti Sanghatna (Women's Awareness Organisation) led a protest and hunger strike. Women were jailed; one woman gave birth in jail. She called her daughter "Jailibhai".'

One of the oldest established slums in Raipur is a small settlement near the wholesale vegetable market, Lenditallab. This was originally an area of water seepage and is owned by the municipality. It is a community of about 500 people, in huts of mud, wood, metal, none higher than about five feet. Being close to the market is convenient for the women vendors, but the waste and refuse accumulate on the ground adjacent to the slum. The structures they have built are solid but cramped and insanitary. Families of eight or ten people sleep in one room, with an earth floor, the kitchen separated by a mud wall. The cooking fires fill the huts with choking smoke; there is no ventilation. The scarlet embers make the interiors of the houses hotter than ever, and in this part of central India summer temperatures regularly rise over 40° Celsius.

Most of the men here are cycle-rickshaw drivers. The red and green flag flutters from their vehicles, and flies over many of the houses. The work of driving is arduous and backbreaking, and rarely yields more than Rs20 or Rs30 a day (40-60 pence). The work is uncertain because there is extreme competition. Most have taken a loan to buy the rickshaw. Many of the vehicles stand idle, a tangle of black-painted metal, with a plastic seat for the passengers, sometimes with a

threadbare canopy to protect the occupants from the rain or sun. Some of them are proudly maintained, painted with flowers, pictures of gods, gold and silver paint. Others are rusty and broken down. The only other work open to men is construction; if they are trained masons or carpenters, they may make a better living, but those who are unskilled are worse off than rickshaw drivers. Some women also work as construction labourers, others work in small garment or plastics factories, but the majority are domestic servants.

I asked them, in a family with four children, how much do you need each day to survive in the city slums? After some time, the people agreed that Rs50 a day ($2) was necessary for a decent life; some felt that Rs40 was enough to survive. 'If you want vegetables as well as dal with rice every day, you would need Rs50.' The word '*khana*', food, means rice to them; and that is the measure of eating properly. In the morning, most eat *pasia*, which is leftover rice soaked in water overnight so that it swells and ferments slightly. At midday, they eat rice with chilli and perhaps one vegetable – brinjal, kobi, which costs Rs3-4 a kilo. In the evening, there will be dal with chappatis. On Sundays they may eat maybe goat or chicken. For people doing heavy manual labour, an adult should eat one kilo of rice a day. Women who work on construction, or who carry headloads greater than their bodyweight, eat the same as men.

What is development, I asked them: '*Vikas, kya hai*?' They said, 'We don't know, we've never seen it.' 'Development', said one woman, 'is the money that goes into the pockets of politicians. If the government will give us security of tenure of the land, then we do not mind moving; if we get one room per family, we will go; at present some of us are sleeping two, three families to a room.' Another woman says, 'The government does not want to give us accommodation because they believe we will sell it and come back to the place where we have been staying. They think we want the money only. The government is befooling us. They may give land to one person and on paper say they have given to fifty. Paper houses are even less use to us than those we have now. In Kashiramnagar, it is true that some people have sold their houses, but they are not doing this for greed, they are doing it from necessity. They are afraid of the antisocial elements where they stay. Here, in the slum, everybody unites at times of suffering; when there is illness and death and pain, people are helped by the support of the community.'

The people have been here for twenty-five years. Why did they come from Orissa in the 1960s? 'There is no farming there. It was a place of drought. There was no foodgrain. Traditionally, we were weavers. But because there is weaving by machine now, there is no work for us. There was skill and beauty in what we made. We took pride in it. But if we were to do that now, no one would buy from us, because they do not want

traditional cloth, they think our work is old-fashioned. We came from Orissa because the land had become unproductive. Our language is Oriya. There we were happy. Here, we are not happy, but we can eat. Anything is better than hunger, so even if unhappiness is the price you pay, you will pay it. Unhappiness is the price of survival. We cannot go back because there is no water. Even if land were given to us, we could do nothing with it. Drought was caused by deforestation.'

The home-place is still evoked with tenderness; and the work of weaving with regret. Both their landscape and their skills have been degraded: only their dignity is not impaired. And it is this stinging sense of loss that has driven them to find strength and succour in the Red-Green Movement.

In Lenditallab, as in the other slums of Raipur, the labour of children is an integral part of the family economy. The Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM) has also been trying to reach the children. On Republic Day, some of them gathered in the RCDRC to reclaim a few hours' leisure from their stolen childhood, and they paused to reflect on their life and labour. Some are the principal earners in their family; others are making life a little easier for their families; some are working desperately to survive. Dhani is 12. His mother works ironing clothes. His aunt makes *agarbatti*, incense sticks, and he works three hours a day with her. For this he gets Rs5 a week (about 9 pence) and he gives it to his mother. Mina is a domestic servant of 14. Her father is a sweet vendor and her mother a domestic worker. She earns Rs150 a month ($6), which she gives to her mother; occasionally, she is given a few rupees to spend for herself. Narayan is 14, and works in the stores of the company that supplies the hospital with cotton, dressings, scissors, etc. He works from 11am to 9pm each day, and gets Rs350 a month. From 7 in the morning until 11, he goes to school and is in the eighth standard. When he finishes work at night, he returns home to study. His father is a rickshaw driver from Orissa and earns Rs10-20 a day. Narayan is studying hard because, he says, he wants to be a policeman.

Papu Ambade is from Gondya in neighbouring Maharashtra. He is in the seventh standard, about 13, and works in a soap factory for Rs50 a week. His father is a construction worker and his mother a *bidi*-roller. His job is to label packs of soap and detergent. He goes to school in the morning. When he finishes his studies, he says, he would like to become a doctor, although he knows the chances are slim.

Pramila is a small girl with a serious face; a determined child of 11 or 12 – she is not sure of her age. She earns Rs80 a month as a domestic help. Her father is a rickshaw puller, and she has three younger brothers and one sister. Her jobs are cleaning and dusting, shopping, serving water to visitors, minding the children. She is given some snacks where she works. Her hours are 8am to 11am, and then from 1pm till 5pm. She has been working for two years.

Rajah is 14. He is apprenticed to a tailor, learning skilled work. He receives only Rs5 a week. He works from 8-10am, then goes to school until work starts again at 4.30pm until 8pm. His father is a sweet-maker. Amjad, 12, makes paper bags. His father brings home the paper and the family work together at home. Amjad doesn't know how much his father earns from this, but he is given 50 paise a day. Santosh, 12, makes *agarbatti*, rolling them, which is the toughest job. Many women who roll *agarbatti* have completely erased the creases in the palms of their hand; their palms also become black. It takes Santosh two hours to make 1,000 *agarbatti* sticks. His mother makes 3,000 a day, and the pay is R1 per 1,000. At 2pm Santosh goes to school. Salim is 10, a *bidi*-maker. He helps his mother; without him, she could not make up the daily quota of 200. Salim goes to school from 7am till 12 noon, then makes *bidis* until 5pm.

Sitaram works in a hotel, so small it has no name. He washes plates and cups, serves pakoras and samosas. He is 13. He works from 7 in the morning until 5pm, and has a half-day off on Sunday. He is paid Rs25 a week ($1). His father is a rickshaw driver. Sukhnami is 10, a solemn and severely exploited child. He works in a vehicle repair shop, holding the metal panels as the older boys and men hammer them into shape. He earns Rs10 a week; his mother is a wage labourer on construction work. Sukhnami works from 8am till 1pm, then from 2pm till 10pm. His father is a rickshaw puller, but he fell ill. Sukhnami had to work and cannot study because he is so tired when he comes home at night.

The labour of the 20 million or so child workers in India is essential for family survival. To talk of doing away with the evil is not possible while the lives of the poor are so insecure. The present government of India has placed its faith in more 'liberalisation', which means doing away even with the nominal laws that already fail to protect the weak. In the process, even greater burdens of exploitation and loss will be imposed upon the least defended. It is this work which the CMM has addressed; and for that Niyogi died.

* * *

In the atmosphere of struggle and resistance that has been generated around Chattisgarh, many brave initiatives have been taken, some of them unique in India. One of the most exciting and original has been the work of the Women's Movement of the CMM. Shashi Sail is editor of *Awaz Aurat Ki* ('Women's Voice'). 'Because of the tribal cultural background, the women of this region are less bound by the traditions that have hindered many Hindu women. They are more militant here, and strong in all the popular movements. In the women's organisation, we are taking up larger social issues – dowry murder, rape, harassment

within the family, and here, in particular, deserted wives. Culturally, a second wife is acceptable here, but only with the consent of the first wife. How that consent is won is often questionable. The men start keeping both wives, and then, after a time, evict the first wife. Deserted women are a growing problem. We had to evolve a way of dealing with it. Legally, it is not an offence to evict the first wife. The courts cannot help in redressing the problem of the abandoned wife. So we developed a way of using the community.

'We have invented the *mahila panchayat*, or committee of women. This is a new experiment, which started two years back. It is made up of women from the village, neighbouring villages, with two or three representatives of our women's organisation. The *mahila panchayat* is formed on an ad hoc basis, to deal with individual cases as they arise. It is not a permanent fixture. The *panchayat* will determine the facts of the case, prepare a report, and then conduct a public hearing in front of the concerned community. In Raipur City, parties from both sides will be invited to make their depositions; and then, afterwards, there will be a report and recommendations. These are then discussed openly, and it is the community's burden to decide whether to implement them and, if so, how best to do it. There has been success in almost every case. The *mahila panchayat* lasts for the duration of the case only, so there is no accumulation of power to any individual.

'One deserted Sindhi woman, Raj Kumari, was abandoned after ten years of marriage. The husband remarried and brought his new wife to the home. We took up the case. After a series of protests, *dharnas*, hunger strikes, posters to help raise the issue of wife-desertion, after seeking help from the law courts and administration, we got nowhere. The girl was sitting outside the house with her 11-year-old daughter. We said to her, "That is your house, go back in there." Meanwhile, the *mahila panchayat* was formed. There was an open hearing in March 1990. Family members, women's groups, youth groups, neighbours, lawyers took part. All came and deposed their evidence. There had been a long battle in the court. All the documents were studied thoroughly and published. Then, in the evening, there was a public meeting of the community. The report of the *mahila panchayat* was read out. The recommendations were that (1) no violence should be inflicted on Raj Kumari or her daughter. She had been beaten, drugged and abducted, and then left at her mother's house. (2) Until the divorce, she should stay in the house. After the divorce, she would move out. (3) She should be paid a monthly maintenance of Rs1,000, because the family in question was quite well off. After the public meeting, 3,000 women took her in a procession to the house, and she went in. She has not been beaten, but has been treated politely, even though they do not maintain her economically. So that is a success. It is a kind of popular justice, tempered with mercy.

'In the most recent case, a woman was murdered in a village for the sake of dowry money. This was in October 1991. The village is in the interior of Chattisgarh, and the woman's father-in-law, who was guilty of the murder, sought to suppress the case. Unless the police are informed, they never come to hear about it. When the police did finally come, there was no information about the case. There was simply a dead body found decomposing in a field. The police said it was a case of suicide. Even the newspapers do not carry an insignificant item about an insignificant person in an insignificant village in the depths of Chattisgarh. This was in Abhanpur Block, Torla village, about 20 kilometres from Raipur.

'When we tried to get information, there was a wall of silence. "What can you do now?" people said. "The girl is dead, you can't bring her back." We had to do a lot of work before the women recognised that a terrible injustice had been done to another woman and that they should act.

'We formed a *mahila panchayat* of nine women: two from our organisation in Raipur, others from the seven villages around. The *mahila panchayat* talked with people from the villages, with young people, women, in order to get information. We spoke to the *thane prabhari*, the police station, and asked them, "What have you done, what is the case you have made?" They had made a report out of the information they had. We convinced them what they had was wrong and insufficient, and we offered them the knowledge we had gained.

'On 20 December 1991, there was a public meeting in the village. Before the meeting, the women went on a procession, over 300 women. At the beginning, there were no men. We set out, chanting slogans, and began our way around the village. Because that village was new to many of us, we did not know the way. One young man came forward and showed us which way to go. There were many children in front of the procession, both girls and boys. We stopped at different places, to tell the people what we were doing, and why we were doing it. After about 3 kilometres, we went back to our meeting. By that time, there were as many men as women.

'At the public meeting, the *mahila panchayat* report was read out, and the recommendations made. These were (1) that the man who had committed the murder should be socially boycotted, and (2) that the dead girl's husband should not be allowed to get married again.

'The social boycott became a big issue. You already have the community *panchayat*, of course, and if something is wrong it is the work of the community *panchayat* to take up the issue and impose due penalties. Our *panchayat* is specifically to deal with issues relating to women – its very existence has social and legal implications. After 20 December, further meetings were held to decide how to implement the social boycott. The idea of the women was that people should not

share with the family the cooked vegetables, the fuel dung-cakes, should not give them *agi*, fire, because not all families have matches, and usually they take a lighted straw from one house to another. The family should not be permitted to be present on special social occasions, like the ceremony of naming a child. We discussed with the Sahu community, to which the man belonged, and asked what the community *panchayat* was doing to redress this wrong. The family involved were poor landless labourers. The girl's family were also poor and landless, and the father was sick. For the first time in the history of the community *panchayat*, a woman's organisation was invited to attend, and our report and ideas asked for. On the basis of our recommendations, they decided on a boycott by the Sahu community also, and that was a big punishment. They have gone further and decided to debar the family from community meetings up to the district level. Only they have the power to do this.

'It is a very delicate issue, because of the non-legal status of the *mahila panchayat*. It has no power to give a judgment but can only make recommendations. The police case was weak. Suicide was not plausible. On 17 January 1992, women *gheraoed* the police station and protested against the attitude of the police. What had been decided by the community was a sufficient punishment; it really doesn't matter if the law does not punish. But people were shirking their social responsibility when they said the law will take its course, that it is not our concern, it is not a matter for community action. Even if the police had arrested the man, he would have been released on bail.

'We cannot take up all cases, but we take on those that show the worst abuses, or where there is a matter of precedent, where the community can take some action. There is always a social dimension to any crime, and this aspect should be dealt with at the social level. Women are concerned by rape, desertion, drinking, gambling. We have hit upon an idea, the idea of the *panchayat*, which is culturally acceptable, so we are not making any excessively radical departure from the culture, although it is a departure and it is radical. We are loyal to the existing *panchayat* and cannot defy it. But, because the idea of a *panchayat* is rooted in Indian experience, it has met with a tremendous success.'

* * *

Since the death of Niyogi, new members have come to the trade union movement. Shock and anger have strengthened the resolve of the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha. In one Raipur industrial estate, where the workers of only one company were affiliated to the red-green flag, there are now twelve whose employees have joined.

The present context of India is, however, against them. It is not

purely fortuitous that Niyogi should have been murdered at this time. India committed itself to 'liberalising' its economy, following the prescriptions of the IMF, World Bank and GATT negotiators. In order to service its $70 billion debt and to compensate for the loss of its former Soviet market, it is desperate to be competitive in world markets. This means that the price of its cheap labour must not be compromised, no matter what the cost of maintaining this competitive advantage.

Many social activists and human rights workers met in Nagpur, in the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, in February 1992, to create a national movement of solidarity with the people of Chattisgarh. They are asking whether the assassination of Niyogi is not perhaps the supreme act of a 'liberalisation' designed to remove any defence of some of the most abused and exploited people in the world. Does the much-trumpeted death of socialism now mean that it is also legitimate to do away with socialists, as they so brutally did away with Shankar Guha Niyogi?

CHRIS WOODALL

Arabicide in France: an interview with Fausto Giudice

When Fausto Giudice's first book, Têtes de Turcs en France, *appeared in 1989, anti-Arab racism there had not reached the fever pitch it has today – and the book was received warmly. But, even as he was researching* Têtes, *Giudice kept stumbling on undocumented or partially-documented Arab killings stretching back twenty years. Soon he realised that a chapter in his first book was not the way to tackle the subject – a separate book was needed.*

Arabicides *was the result. It is the fruit of investigative work into some of the estimated 200 cases of Arab killing that have come to light over the last two decades. What has emerged is a relentless series of almost identikit pictures, in which assassins, victims, the legal machinery and supposed anti-racist organisations appear caught up in a process that changes only in its details from instance to instance. A peculiarly French form of serial killing in which, eerily, the people at the centre of the drama, the assassin and the victim, are nonetheless different individuals on each occasion.*

The book was researched and written without any official statistics to start from and without any systematic, monitoring group documentation to provide an initial pool of information and guidance. The book has received scarcely any attention and, some fourteen months after publication, is no longer listed as in print. There is, officially, no such thing as an 'arabicide' – the word is Fausto's invention – and the term seems no more likely to enter Le Dictionnaire Robert *than the book to reappear in print. The subject remains taboo.*

Fausto Giudice is a freelance journalist and writer, living in Paris, and the author of *Têtes de Turcs en France* (Paris, La Découverte, 1989) and *Arabicides: une chronique Française 1970-1991* (Paris, La Découverte, 1992).
Chris Woodall is a freelance translator and journalist, living in London.

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Because several months had elapsed since our conversation, when it came to writing this brief introduction, I phoned Fausto to ask him whether the pattern of Arab killing seemed to be undergoing any change and whether our conversation was still up to date. (He confirmed that it was.) I wanted to know, in particular, whether the election of the Right in France and the battery of anti-'immigrant' measures introduced by the infamous Pasqua laws had, as far as he could judge, unleashed more Arab killings. 'Not at all,' he wryly replied, 'it's the police now who take care of all that.'

Chris Woodall: How did you decide to write a book about racist murders and why did you call it *Arabicides*?

Fausto Giudice: In my previous book, *Têtes de Turcs en France*, I investigated different forms of institutional discrimination. Instead of focusing on matters of theory or on individual case histories, I looked at the experiences of groups of people: former Algerian soldiers who had fought for the French, Portuguese construction workers, African women forced to have unwanted caesareans, Moroccan families faced with deportation, and so on. As my research progressed, I realised that my original idea of covering Arab-killings in a single chapter simply would not do: a separate book was needed.

Arabicides is about Arabs who were killed because they were Arabs and about how the fact that they were Arabs influences, in a systematic way, the legal procedures following their killing. I decided to call these killings 'Arabicides' in order to be precise. There have not been hundreds of Africans or Indochinese murdered in France simply because they were Africans or Indochinese. But hundreds of Arabs have been killed in the last twenty years, principally because they were known to be (or looked like) Arabs. However much the subjective motivations of the assassins may vary, they are all treated in a broadly similar way by French law because of something that their victims have in common: they were Arabs. It is the behaviour of the institutions themselves that forces one to lump these killings together. To talk, therefore, of 'racist crime' would almost be to sidestep the specific questions that are raised by the repeated killing of Arabs in France. That's the first point. The second point is that when a term has become a cliché, it is no longer of any use. 'Racist crime' has been evacuated of any meaning; in France it can now mean anything and nothing. Thirdly, under French law, there is simply no such category as 'racist crime', and even the effort to have 'racism' entered as the motivation for premeditated murders, with racism consequently figuring as an aggravating circumstance, has been a spectacular failure. The courts have thrown it out time and again. No public prosecutor has ever agreed to go down this road. So one had to try a new tack.

CW: What cases did you exclude from your investigation?

FG: Obviously, I did not consider every single killing in which the victim was an Arab. Many I have had to leave to one side, not because I was able to rule out any racial motivation, but simply because I lacked the evidence necessary to tell the full story. To take just one example: I read in the papers that a certain Tunisian car-park attendant had been killed by a 'madman' fleeing from a psychiatric hospital, but, since I was unable to find out anything more about the supposed madman, there was nothing further I could say, so I said nothing. Experience tells me, however, that the madman's choice of victim may have been not totally unrelated to, let us say, the victim's swarthy appearance... But I have nothing to go on.

CW: What were your main sources for *Arabicides*?

FG: Wherever possible, I worked with victims' families, lawyers, witnesses, journalists and people in MRAP and other broadly anti-racist organisations. There is little systematic monitoring of such matters, no victims' associations. I was not able to meet the killers themselves. To obtain authorisation to meet just one convicted assassin – even assuming you can find one who will talk to you and even assuming you have a perfect 'pedigree' and can pull all the right political and bureaucratic strings (which I certainly could not) – still takes at least a year and a half. So that line of enquiry was out.

CW: You say there is little systematic monitoring of racist attacks or murders. How do you account for this?

FG: The underlying reason for this failure is that most people simply do not see Arab-killings as a particular form of racism: the evidence is simply not recognised or collected. In many of these killings, it is impossible to establish that, at the moment of the murder, the killer had racist motivations. And, of course, during questioning, the policemen and investigators don't make any effort to get the murderer to say, 'I killed him because he's an Arab.' And it is not something that a murderer blurts out spontaneously. Even when a witness testifies that the murderer, on killing his victim, actually said 'dirty Arab', it can still be argued that this is such a very common and ordinary type of expression that it cannot be taken to represent the motive. Besides which, such witnesses are themselves often Arabs and their submissions are automatically suspect. So what happens in general is that the legal machine and every other institution involved treats such killings according to a specific model that, in fact, only applies to Arab-killings, while at the same time denying any acknowledgment of their obvious racial element.

CW: In these circumstances, how have anti-racist associations or lawyers sought to use the legal system?

FG: It is easy enough to denounce a 'racist crime' but much harder to do the step-by-step work needed to follow the legal case through. When anti-racist associations decide to bring an independent action (*se constituer partie civile*) for legal damages after one of these killings, they often face up to the seriousness of this commitment. It has to mean getting down to the nitty-gritty of the case and, together with the lawyers, taking on the job of investigation and confronting the examining judge, the public prosecutor and his office.

CW: Could you explain how the procedure works and what openings it provides?

FG: Provided they've been in existence for at least five years and provided their founding statutes state that they 'combat racism', associations in France can undertake an independent action. It works like this. If a member of your family is killed and a suspect is arrested, the public prosecutor then starts legal proceedings and an examining judge investigates the case. On advice from the public prosecutor's office, a charge is then pronounced against the suspect: murder, manslaughter, assault and battery, whatever. An association representing the community to which the victim belonged might then seek permission to associate with the public prosecutor in the court action, on the grounds that the murder of the victim had been racially motivated and that it had therefore struck a blow at the dignity and integrity of the community to which the victim belonged and which the association represents. This appeal to associate in the public prosecution would then be considered and either accepted or rejected.

If the request is accepted, the association is represented in court alongside the family when the case comes to trial. There are thus two separate injured parties in court, associated with the public prosecutor's case, both able to demand reparation, including financial damages. It is, after all, always very expensive to go to court. So, in theory at least, an anti-racist association or an Algerian or Moroccan workers' association or other relevant body is empowered to bring this action, to seek damages. And, if it wins damages, this is then an important acknowledgment by the law that the case was not just one more vaguely motivated murder, but that, in this instance, Mr X, by killing Mr Y, had also struck a blow at the dignity, honour and integrity of all those who shared Mr Y's background.

But what actually happens? Even if applications to bring independent actions are accepted at the investigation stage, when the case comes to trial they are thrown out. The court decides in its wisdom that the association had no good reason to bring an independent action and that, in other words, the murder in question had nothing to do with racism. Given the poor success rate that anti-racist associations have achieved in their attempts to bring independent actions, increasingly, they now

prefer to avoid going down this road. It seems to be courting defeat. But this is a climbdown and can only give comfort to the racists. The usual tactic now is to provide the family with a friendly lawyer without bringing a separate and independent action. This gives the association access to the case and notes and makes it possible to follow the case at one remove, and perhaps to jump in at a later stage if it looks as if an independent action would stand any chance of success. It is a way of not getting too committed at too early a stage, while remaining able to follow the progress of the case from a safeish distance.

CW: How successful are attempts by victims' families or locally established groups to campaign around racist murders?

FG: The legal process has the effect of making each case a purely individual matter. It is a basic principle of the legal justice system that you don't judge a crime, you judge a criminal. In order to judge a criminal, you refer to the criminal law code at your disposal. What is a crime? That and that alone which is defined as such in the criminal law code. That's all there is to it. And the simple fact is that there is no such thing as a racist crime (*crime*) in the French criminal law code. There is only racist misdemeanour (*délit*). Whereas crimes are judged by the *cour d'assises* (like the British Crown Court) and may carry prison sentences of over five years, misdemeanours are judged by the *tribunal correctionel* (like a British magistrates' court) and are punishable by less than five years' prison sentence. To refuse someone a job or a house on explicitly racial grounds is a racist misdemeanour. But there's no such thing as a racist crime.

CW: How does this distinction apply to Arab-killings?

FG: Let's imagine a very straightforward case. Let us imagine that someone kills an Arab in front of witnesses after carefully explaining that he was motivated by the fact that his victim was an Arab and that he hated all Arabs. The legal justice system would find itself faced with a range of alternatives. If it was impartial and took such killings seriously and wished to punish them severely, the charge would be for premeditated murder. The premeditation would be demonstrated by the explicitly stated racist motive. In the criminal law code, there is nothing that explicitly punishes racist crime, but the judge or public prosecutor could write 'anti-Arab motives' under the 'premeditation' heading. This would make the murder more serious: it would be seen as an aggravating circumstance. This is one road that some lawyers are now trying to go down, but it has never yet worked. In other words, these crimes that I have focused on could be punished severely as premeditated murders motivated by racism – even though there is no such thing as a 'racist crime' in French criminal law.

CW: Why does this approach not work? What happens in practice?

FG: What actually happens is that if someone kills an Arab and says 'dirty Arab' as he does so, he is convicted by the *tribunal correctionel* (magistrates' court) to three months' imprisonment for 'racist insult' and by the *cour d'assises* (Crown Court) to, say, five years' imprisonment for murder. The two things are split apart, dissociated. Why does this happen? On the one hand, it is because of the nature of the criminal law system. But, above all, it is determined by procedural routine and by the unconfessed existence of this particular model of crime and the model of continually repeated response that I have outlined in *Arabicides*. There is now a whole body of accumulated precedents and Arab-killings have come to seem normal, commonplace. The general psychological climate that is created during the investigation process and which emerges clearly during the trial is basically to say, 'Arabs are paranoid and there are a few hysterical non-Arabs who share their paranoia.' This is the all-encompassing, palpable climate at trials of Arab-killers. I have seen and experienced this time and again at the trials I've been to. The family and the friends of the Arab victim, the Arab or anti-racist lawyer and the pain-in-the-neck – me, for example – who's just there to make trouble and cry 'racist'.

CW: How are victims' families, local associations, etc., able to react when a killing occurs?

FG: Very often the families who suffer from the killing of one of their members are families who are caught in a phase of transition. Often the killing puts an absolute halt to a process of social integration that, until then, was progressing steadily. After all, there is nothing better calculated than a murder to halt the process of social integration of a family.

The victims tend to be of the third or fourth generation. Such families tend to be struggling out of poverty and 'rising' up through society. Some of the children will be at college or planning to go there soon. Often the young victims are precisely those who were going to university and who bore many of the family's real or symbolic hopes on their shoulders. A recent example is of a young man killed by a policeman. The young man had himself just sat the exam to become a policeman. You can bet your life that no one from his district for the foreseeable future will be sitting the police force entry exam. He was, it is said, driving his moped too fast. The families are generally silent: it is the silence of despair. Their experiences following the murder serve to confirm all their fears, their 'paranoia'. The mothers tend to ask: why was my son killed? They expect an answer to come from the legal system. The law makes no reply, treats the matter as perfectly commonplace, refuses to look at the specific characteristics of this kind of murder. The families are reduced to silence.

For the children, the murder and trial often provide a sharp learning curve. The friends or immediate family of victims, drawn into the trial, tend to come from the poorer outer-city districts and their familiarity with the law is at the small-time level of magistrates' courts and petty offences. They have no real notion of the *cour d'assises*, except from TV. When they see for themselves how things are done, it makes them question: 'How come my neighbour got a longer prison sentence for nicking a motorbike than that bloke is going to serve for killing Ahmed?' As for the parents, they are always susceptible to fears of being sent back. Even when, in actual fact, there is no way they could be 'sent back' anywhere, the killing of a family member does 'send them back' symbolically. It brings all the old fears and insecurities back to the surface. Sometimes the families say they have been 'put back in their place'. Like institutional discrimination, its effect on the whole family is one of symbolic deportation, expulsion.

CW: What of the wider public response to such cases?

FG: The interest of the public in these killings fluctuates wildly. But one thing is certain: it was easier to get people to come out when the Right was in power than it was when the Left came in. And it's not because there are any fewer killings or attacks under the Left. The anti-racist associations, linked more or less closely to the Socialist party, tend to shout much more loudly when an Arab is killed under a right-wing interior minister than under a socialist one. Victims' families observe how this works, realise everything is muddied with party politics and that there are a lot of people intent on waving the victims' shrouds.

CW: How does the media treatment of Arab-killing and that of French-on-French killing compare?

FG: I don't know of enough cases to comment on that precisely. All I can say is that, in the recent history of France, there is a habit, learnt during the war with Algeria, of explaining away Arab corpses by saying that they were killed during a 'settling of accounts' between rival factions or gangs. During the last stage of the war with Algeria, the newspapers were full of news-in-brief items that ran 'North African found dead, no doubt as a result of inter-gang tit-for-tat killing'. Even some of the bodies that surfaced after the 17 October 1961 Papon massacre* were accounted for in this way: basically as gangland killings. And, of course, there was just enough of a grain of truth in this to give it credibility. There was, after all, an armed conflict between the

* At a massive demonstration in Paris to protest the nightly curfew imposed on Algerians during the war and the high level of police violence against them, between 140 and 200 Algerians were killed, by being clubbed to death, machine-gunned or driven into the Seine. Some 400 people were reported missing. Papon was chief of police at the time.

FLN (National Liberation Front) and the MNA (Algerian National Movement) – the MNA was collaborating with the French police. So there were shootings and reprisals. But...

CW: In *Arabicides*, you dwell at length on France's failure to confront its history, to talk about collaborationism during the second world war, to discuss the war against Algeria, the 17 October 1961 massacre, etc. At a certain point, you ask the question: 'If the French father who fought in Algeria had only talked to his son about his experiences, would his son still have gone out and killed an Arab?' Do you really offer this failure to confront history as an explanation for twenty years' killing?

FG: I am not a theory-builder, but one thing is patently obvious to me: Arab-killers are getting younger. What I cannot help noticing is that before me in the dock I now see young men who were conceived and born at the end or after the end of the war in Algeria. Their fathers, whom I also see in court, are in the age group of men who were sent to fight that war between 1954 and 1962. Almost three million Frenchmen were involved in that war machine. Not all of them saw active service, tortured or killed Algerians. But those who actually did the fighting were out there for two or three years in uniform, bearing arms. The common perception of that war is that it achieved nothing because France was defeated. Their war was against people who were basically invisible to them: this comes out again and again in one firsthand account after another. By invisible, I mean that the enemy was lost in the midst of the general population or hidden in the mountains; the only real contact was with prisoners. They saw their enemy when they finally managed to capture one alive and get their hands on him. What is striking about accounts of the war by French soldiers who served in Algeria is that they talk about their enemy just as cowboys talk of Indians in Westerns. They talk of how the enemy would suddenly appear, fire a few shots and then vanish again. Those who were caught were, of course, tortured. So, of these three million men, perhaps 15,000 actively performed torture, but all three million were involved in that war machine and they knew perfectly well what was going on. The war was 'for nothing', they returned to France and then had to live with (a) literally unspeakable war traumatism; (b) defeat and shame rather than triumph and recognition.

But then, back in France, they found they were surrounded by the people who, in Algeria, had been invisible. It was the moment of mass immigration from North Africa. They found they were living side by side with them, with the same mix of contradictory emotions and uncertainties: love and hate, attraction and repulsion, contempt and admiration, and above all fear and fantasy. And their children were growing up with their children, going to school with them. And all this

passed off under a deadweight of silence. And, as far as I know, no one in France in the last thirty years has taken the trouble to examine the way in which these three million men were taken apart, put back together again and permanently marked in their way of being, their way of feeling, their way of behaving, in both public and private life.

So when I am in the courts, I see a father whose son is in the dock for killing an Arab, a father who quite possibly has also once killed an Arab – perhaps at a distance, with a rifle, without seeing his victim. There is something here that needs examining. I can't build a theory on it, that's not my job. All I can do is point out that there is something here, a thread that has to be drawn out. And with this 'something here', I simply try to pierce through the thick layers of cotton wool that have accumulated around this whole business. I know perfectly well that the dominant reaction to such attempts is the panic cry of 'no connection, no connection, no connection!' It is never admitted that there might be any connection between one Arab-killing and another, or between these Arab-killings and recent history. But when I see the fathers in court and imagine what they were doing when they were their son's age, when I see the presiding judges in the law courts with their war medals pinned to their breast, when I overhear a presiding judge talking down to a French lawyer of Algerian background and saying, 'You must try to understand that under French law that's the way it is', I know that there is 'something there'.

It's no more than a thread that I cannot follow up. To do so would require lengthy work with, say, at least fifty families of Arab-killers as well as the killers themselves. As I said earlier, you can't gain access to these people and, besides, they simply don't talk. It's quite obvious that these killers do not talk. One might expect the pre-trial psychiatrists' reports to be helpful. But they are not. They, too, are caught up in a legal machinery. There's a quick conversation for the sake of form and then the psychiatrist's report says things like: 'The accused has no communication difficulties, he is articulate, he's perfectly grown-up. He had a happy childhood.'

These murders committed by the sons are like acts of war, acts of revenge. They link up with what one can call a certain tradition. One last example. Some of the Arab-killings I have examined involved people shooting from their high-rise apartment windows. Shooting Arabs in the street from one's window was a well-known practice during the Algerian war. It's a particular form of murder that has no other specific origin and no other present-day practice.

CW: At another point in your book you suggest that former immigrants – Italians, for example – seem to assert their Frenchness by attacking Arabs. One becomes French by adopting anti-Arab attitudes and behaviour. Can you expand on this?

FG: There is no doubt that this French-Arab, French-Algerian, French-North African pairing is the most important relationship or polarity in French society: it determines the way in which other minority groups position themselves. It is here that you come up against the colonial situation. One of the most frequent comments made by newly-arrived Indochinese immigrants is that there are too many Arabs and Africans in France. It doesn't take long for them to realise that it is not in their interest to be assimilated into Arab or African subculture. Some, not all, tend therefore to become whiter than white, Frencher than French, and a form of 'positive racism' emerges in their favour.

I myself grew up in Tunisia in a family that on one side was Sicilian. So we, too, in a certain way, found ourselves in an intermediate position between the French and the Arabs. We hesitated, unsure as to whom we should despise the most, the French or the Arabs. Most such Italians came rapidly to the conclusion that it was better to be French. This colonial polarity between French and Arab is still one of the mainsprings of French social development.

CW: What role has been played over recent years by anti-racism?

FG: Over the last twenty years, what we've had is organisations like LICRA (International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism) or SOS Racisme intervening generally with one eye on the media, parachuting in on an area they don't know after a killing has occurred and declaring it's a 'racist crime'. The stunned family listens and says, 'Sure, so where does that leave us?' In the end, where that leaves them is in a slightly better flat or, a year later, seeing the setting-up of a local youth club. Each time the same bitterness: 'It wasn't till they took a shot at us that you politicos discovered we existed.'

For the Socialist party, SOS Racisme was designed as a point of contact with the younger generation – in fact, a means to control them. For the Socialist party, SOS Racisme was designed to interface with one section of the population and *France Plus* with another. Both have failed. SOS Racisme has been discredited and *France Plus* has got bogged down in its corruption scandals.

You must not forget that 'anti-racism' in France has been official policy, linked to the Socialist party or the Communist party – as the case may be. Anti-racism equals the Left, so racism must equal not-the-Left. The Left and anti-racism are so inextricable that it comes to seem ridiculous to suggest that racism and the Left could ever go together.

But since the links between anti-racist movements and party politics have been so very strong and since parties naturally have to be seen to be respectable, anti-racist movements have chosen their victims with

care. There are good and bad victims. Where the victim was a petty criminal with a police record, he could no longer be presented as wholly innocent. Some victims are better than others. Malik Oussekine* was a particularly excellent victim. He was even on the point of converting to Catholicism. Unfortunately, he had a brother who was an absolute hood – but that only emerged during the murder investigation. Given the realpolitik of such politically-connected associations, these considerations are the ones that matter. If you follow racist killings over years, as I have done, you suddenly notice, 'huh! it seems there are more racist killings in the run-up to elections!' There aren't, of course. They just get more exposure at election time.

Another problem with anti-racism has been the confusion among individual anti-racists themselves. Guilt and echoing memories of colonialism seem to drive their work much more than basic notions of people's rights. And when this 'anti-racism' then collapses, fails to achieve its goals, the backlash is appalling. People are sick of being guilt-tripped. And what then comes under attack is what really matters: in this case, the rights of Arabs in France. In the backlash, the idea that creeps through public opinion, in that slippery way that can never quite be nailed down, is that 'Arabs think they're entitled to everything'. And the reason that this message can make progress is precisely because anti-racism fails to make clear that what is at issue is equal rights, not something extra. So when one demands that someone who has killed an Arab should be judged and sentenced in an equitable way, it is asking too much. They accuse you of crying racism.

In the end, what do we have? We have a situation in which the real things that are happening with these killings cannot be given their right names, easily dismissed labels are stuck on people, and everything takes place in crushing silence. People behave like automatons. You arrive in the courtroom, the lawyer looks like an Arab, and you see the body language and hear the whispering, 'They're going to tell us all over again that it was a racist crime.' Even if the lawyer doesn't use that term, it makes no difference, no one listens. But this forced ditching of any talk of 'racism' makes it absolutely clear that the whole situation and procedure is indeed utterly racist. There are trials that are like performances, in which everyone dances around the central issue without ever saying what is on everyone's mind. Each time there is the slightest reference or mention of 'race' or 'racism', people react with great shock: 'My god, my god, no, no, no, no!' Recently, just after my book came out, an Algerian lawyer, during his deposition, brandished *Arabicides* in front of the jurors – and the lawyer for the accused reacted by calling him a racist!

*Malik Oussekine (a dialysis patient) died after being beaten by police on 6 December 1986. He happened to cross their path on a night when a student demonstration was taking place.

SOS Racisme was a political operation in response to a groundswell of protest against racism. It was a machine with all the spontaneity of a machine, that is to say none. It was designed and marketed and, for a time, it did its job – concerts and so on, launched from on high. There was very little space left for grassroots or individual initiatives. This kind of thing is now on its way out, leaving behind it bitterness and disappointment and a sense of defeat. It's tiptoeing out, its head down. SOS Racisme is an office that once a year shakes itself back to life in order to hold a concert. It has brought some blacks and Arabs into the Socialist party, given a few people a leg-up into parliament.

CW: You paint a bleak picture – anti-racist associations that are impotent, or worse, communities that are too terrorised to react to violence and murder. Is there any evidence of any slackening off of racist violence in France?

FG: This specific crime of Arab-killing has continued to reproduce itself on an almost identical pattern for over twenty years. In the three weeks immediately after my book came out three more Arab-killings came to my notice, made-to-measure, as it were. They were greeted by the odd article in the press, a demonstration by local young lads, a few windows smashed in protest, a small revolt lasting one night, and that's it. And so it goes on.

CW: Arabicides has been greeted in France with an embarrassed silence and shelved in bookshops under 'exotica'. At the end of your book, you refer very briefly to the isolated character of your work and express a belief that the way forward must run a line deep through the past, that the path to follow is the path of the 'long memory'. Could you be more explicit?

FG: That was my personal message to the many people across France whom I know and who seem to be in utter despair. The man whose dad died in an accident on a building-site, who lost one brother to a bar-owner and the other brother to an unemployed man, and who himself now seems on the verge of madness. Believe me, there are a lot of people like that. People chewing over their own stories. And the people who used to be around them, close to them, so-called 'anti-racists', etc. have gradually abandoned them, moved on to other things. What I say to them is that they must retain their memory, at whatever risk, even at the risk of being called 'mad'. I am reminded of those stories of people returning from concentration camps at the end of the war and being greeted with the words, 'Good thing you've come back. Now we can tell you what hell we've been living through while you've been away.' And the camp survivors just listened. How could they begin to tell their story? They knew they wouldn't be believed.

In the end, the real betrayal committed by so many militants and

politicians towards those most directly affected by Arab-killings was somehow unavoidable. For it consists in the fact that, for militants, as for the law and as for the police, these killings were just one issue among others. How can I explain that better?

One must not be derailed by the inconsistency and eclecticism that are the hallmarks of the party politician and the journalist, for whom each day brings a brand new 'talking point'. You have to insist on continuity, trace a path. The path linking the deportation of French Jews, the war in Algeria and the continuing Arab-killings of our sprawling suburbs is not always easy to indicate. There are some people whose own lives reveal this link in a way that is palpably obvious to them, and they will certainly one day find a way of passing this memory on. But it cannot be communicated within a framework that is rotten from top to bottom and where the past is constantly denied, covered up. The kind of 'anti-racism' confected by the Communist party and Socialist party traditions is absolutely antipathetic to this memory. Something else is needed. There are new generations that go out and rebel, young second- and third-generation Arabs, blacks and others. Unlike SOS Racisme concerts, these groups of kids are truly ethnically mixed, they tend to be all-inclusive.

CW: What did you want *Arabicides* to achieve?

FG: I wanted to piece together a chronicle of these killings in an attempt to save them from oblivion. I wanted to make sure there would be a starting point for others who come after me and who wish to work on this issue when at last people begin to take an interest in it. Perhaps in ten, perhaps in twenty years. After all, debates on collaborationism erupted around 1975, thirty years after the end of the second world war. Controversy about the war in Algeria (which finished in 1962) began to surface in 1992. You see, it seems to take thirty years.

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TYLER STOVALL

Colour-blind France? colonial workers during the first world war

The belief that France is a country without significant prejudice against people of colour has proved surprisingly durable. American blacks, in particular, have often praised the land where Josephine Baker rose to stardom, accepting that anyone who could assimilate into French culture would be welcomed as an equal. However, scholarly investigations of this issue have called into question the idea of a colour-blind France. William Cohen, for example, has pointed to widespread racial stereotyping and discrimination in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries among the French.[1]

The growth of Jean-Marie LePen's National Front and the difficulties experienced by the so-called 'second generation' in France today give the question of French racism an importance transcending academic debates. In the face of contemporary France's problems in dealing with outsiders, some have argued that the crucial factor is xenophobia, not racism. Granting the long history of French intolerance towards foreigners, this line of argument suggests that hostility to immigrant workers is based on their status as poor immigrants, not on their skin colour: so, since many immigrant workers in France are actually white Europeans, their position at the bottom of the country's socioeconomic hierarchy derives primarily from class and foreign status, not race.[2]

However, an examination of recent French history shows that all immigrant workers have not always been of equal status – as evidenced by their use in the first world war. In order to sustain its agriculture and vital munitions industries during the war, the French government

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brought large numbers of foreigners both from other European countries and from regions outside Europe to work in its factories. Their conditions of recruitment, employment and remuneration varied widely, but the greatest differences existed between European and 'colonial' workers. In this instance, therefore, racial considerations clearly conditioned the reception of immigrant labour in France.

Recruiting a new labour force

By the early twentieth century, France, as 'Europe's melting pot', had already established a history as a recipient of immigrant labour unmatched on the continent. In 1911, French census takers counted over one million resident aliens in France, most of whom worked in blue-collar occupations. For the most part, these immigrants came from countries like Belgium, Germany and Italy which bordered on France. The outbreak of war in 1914 and the mobilisation of many of the country's young men into the military created pressing new needs for labour. In spite of efforts to find other sources of labour in France, especially women, by the beginning of 1915 government and industry leaders had become convinced of the need to recruit workers from abroad. As a result of both public and private initiatives, therefore, over half a million foreigners came to work in French factories and fields during the conflict. Of this number, roughly 330,000 were Europeans, predominantly Spaniards, whereas 223,000 came from the French colonies and China.[3]

Differences between European and non-European workers began with the ways in which they were recruited. In general, the former entered France much more easily. The case of Spanish immigrants is instructive. Two hundred and thirty thousand Spaniards, 70 per cent of all European immigrant labour, worked in France during the war and, of all immigrant workers, they seem to have been the least regulated. Since the Spanish government, in order to preserve its neutral status, forbade French labour recruitment on its soil, most Spaniards were hired at the border. Many of these were illegal immigrants, crossing the frontier with false papers. After mid-1915, the government's National Farm Labour Bureau worked to coordinate the allocation of those Spaniards (the majority) who came to work on French farms, but much of this immigration remained relatively haphazard and uncontrolled for the duration of the war.

Unlike the Spaniards, Europeans from other countries, especially the Portuguese, Italians and Greeks, did experience a significant level of regulation. The French government negotiated specific accords with the Italian and Portuguese governments concerning recruitment and employment conditions, while Greek refugees were recruited by French consular officials and brought to France in government ships.

However, the state control of labour recruitment and immigration was applied most comprehensively to non-Europeans. Almost all workers from the French colonies and China were brought into France, and closely controlled there, by the French government. During 1915, a division of the Armaments (later Labour) Ministry handled recruitment in the empire. In June, an initial group of 1,000 Algerian agricultural workers were brought into the country to help with the harvest; during the same month, the first large contingent of Indochinese labourers left for France. In January 1916, however, the War Ministry took over this function, creating the Colonial Labour Organisation Service (SOTC) to bring in colonial subjects. Thus, most colonial workers came to France under the aegis of the military and, unlike Europeans, were subject to military conditions and discipline. SOTC also directed the recruitment of workers from China. Building on the contacts made by the exploratory mission of Lieutenant-Colonel Georges Truptil to China at the end of 1915, SOTC began importing Chinese in the spring of 1916. Unlike colonial workers, in theory, those from China were free volunteers, but in fact, being controlled by SOTC, they experienced similar conditions.[4]

Altogether, almost a quarter of a million people (222,763) came from the French colonies and China to work in France during the first world war. The largest single group came from Algeria (78,566); other large contingents came from Indochina, principally Annam and Tonkin (48,995), China (36,941) and Morocco (35,506), followed by Tunisia (18,249) and Madagascar (4,546). Only token numbers of workers came from France's sub-Saharan African possessions.[5]

Greater government control of non-white immigrant labour during the first world war brought about the most significant difference between the recruitment of European and non-European workers. Whereas Europeans came to France on a voluntary basis, many Asians and North Africans were essentially brought in as forced labour. Economic hard times spurred many Europeans to seek work in France. Although Catalonia and the Basque country enjoyed an industrial boom during the war, south-eastern Spain experienced a major slump. Nearly 70 per cent of the Spanish workers in France came from this region. The relatively high wages paid by French farms and factories proved sufficient to attract thousands to cross the Pyrenees. Greece, the second largest European supplier of labour for France during the first world war, suffered severe economic hardship due to the submarine war and the disruption of ties with the Turkish mainland. In addition, many Greeks saw working in France as an initial step towards the ultimate goal, emigration to the United States. Although many European immigrant workers eventually became disillusioned with life in France, all available evidence suggests that they chose to go there freely, even eagerly.[6]

The recruitment of North African and Indochinese workers for France assumed a very different character. During the first year of the war, the French government focused on its colonies as a source of military rather than industrial manpower. In parts of the French empire, most notably sub-Saharan Africa, this need for colonial troops prevented significant recruitment of local inhabitants for labour in France for the duration of the war. By the end of 1915, however, Paris was calling on the colonial authorities in North Africa and Indochina to furnish both soldiers and workers. In November 1915, the Munitions Ministry requested 25,000-30,000 workers from Algeria, but by July 1916, fewer than 5,000 had been recruited. Faced with the resistance of ordinary Algerians as well as the colonial administration (which feared a labour shortage and resultant higher wages in Algeria), the French government responded with the decree of 14 September 1916. This established quotas of Algerian labour to be sent to France and allowed for the recruitment of workers through military conscription if not enough volunteered. In Tunisia, conscription was also used to bring workers to France. On 31 January 1917, the Bey of Tunis, through whom the French operated their protectorate of the country, decreed that the draft would be used to provide workers as well as combatants for France. The French did not abandon efforts to recruit volunteers in North Africa during the first world war, but reinforced them with the threat of conscription.[7]

In Indochina, in contrast to North Africa, the French authorities did not resort to the direct requisitioning of labour. At the beginning of 1916, they initiated a major propaganda campaign to persuade Indochinese to sign up for work in France, a campaign which involved putting up thousands of posters throughout the colony. For the most part, however, the colonial administration fixed enlistment quotas for different areas and left it to indigenous village and local authorities to fill them. The 'voluntary' nature of this form of recruitment was questionable, to say the least. Village leaders invariably chose to recruit the poorest individuals with the least connections and had a number of ways, such as the threat of reprisals against their families, to overcome the hesitation of the reluctant. The French were aware of the true character of this system; colonial authorities received numerous letters from anonymous writers, especially women, accusing village leaders of recruiting by force. As one colonial inspector noted in January 1917:

> The indigenous recruits are volunteers in the sense that they are informed in the capital of their native provinces, and then, when they are brought under military authority, that they are free to stay or to go. However, the number of those who spontaneously ask to join up is small. The intervention of local authorities is necessary to prompt these enlistments. This is only a form of propaganda

adapted to the timorous, indecisive mentality of the Annamites...[8]

Therefore, unlike European immigrants, many of those who came from the French empire to work in France during the war did so unwillingly. As one Madagascan worker in Toulon noted in a letter to his father:

> Recruitment continues in Tananarive, but it is no longer really voluntary: it is forcible. At the end of last year, the Moiadidy warned us it would be this way, and that is why I joined up without waiting to be drafted. But we have been deceived: I signed up as a carpenter, and they put me to work breaking stones.[9]

The French use of forced colonial labour led to both individual and collective acts of resistance. The reluctance of North Africans and Indochinese to volunteer arose both from the widespread belief that those recruited as workers would actually be used as soldiers, and from negative descriptions of life in France sent back by those already there. One type of resistance was the attempt to find substitutes for those requisitioned by the authorities. In Indochina, families would substitute elderly or infirm members, in the hopes that they would be rejected on medical grounds and the family as a whole would be spared.[10] In Tunisia, where one could legally purchase replacements for the draft, families mobilised their resources towards this end. One Tunisian worker writing from south-western France in 1918 stressed the importance of doing so:

> Give us information on the draft lottery. Have operations begun or not? Insofar as you are concerned, my dear brother, if God decrees that you are taken, do not allow yourself to come to this country. Sell everything you possess and buy a replacement. Here, we are suffering from famine.[11]

Resistance to conscription also took the form of large-scale revolts in both Indochina and North Africa. In Cambodia, recruitment led to an insurrection in 1916, and both there and in Cochin China recruiters failed to overcome widespread hostility, consequently signing up few people. In November 1916, conscription led to an uprising of over 1,000 people in the Kabyle province of Algeria. In both cases, resistance seems to have been directed against both military and labour conscription.[12]

Thus in France, during the first world war, there existed a significant difference between free and non-free immigrant labour. The basic distinction was between those from the French empire and those from independent countries. However, the fact that this distinction largely reflected racial differences linked the differences in the recruitment of immigrant workers to France to the wider political disparity between whites and non-whites in the world as a whole. Moreover, the

regulation and living conditions of these workers during the first world war reinforced the importance of the colour line in France.

Controlling the labour force

Since the French government played a central role in regulating the living and working conditions of wartime foreign labour, any analysis of those conditions must begin with a description of the state mechanisms concerned with this issue. Like much of the French government's wartime economic policy, these mechanisms developed gradually and haphazardly; not until 1915 did definite organisations come into existence. The first to do so, the National Farm Labour Office (ONMA), was actually a private body subsidised by the Agriculture Ministry. With official sanction, it recruited immigrants from Spain and Italy, finding them jobs on French farms. In March 1916, the government created the Interministerial Labour Commission (CIMO) to ensure that employers had adequate labour. Consisting of government, employer and trade union representatives, CIMO assumed responsibility for assigning immigrants to different employers as well as for overseeing their living and working conditions. Departmental Placement Offices (ODP) supplemented these functions at the local level. In January 1916, the War Ministry created the SOTC to administer Chinese and colonial labour and, in June, the Armaments Ministry established the Central Foreign Labour Service (SCMOE) for European immigrant workers. These last two organisations were the ones that dealt most directly with immigrant workers.[13]

In dealing with European workers, the French government sought to control their lives in order to ensure the maximum benefit for the war effort and the minimum social dislocation. The immigrants' first contact with government regulation was the labour contracts which virtually all foreigners working in France, with the significant exception of most Spaniards, had to sign. In March 1916, the Armaments Ministry sent Bertrand Nogaro to Rome to persuade the Italian government to facilitate the movement of its nationals to France to work. The accords reached in May included the first wartime contracts for foreign workers. They specified wage levels for different categories of labour, the length of the working day and the duration of the contract (generally six months). Travel to France was to be paid by the employer, and provisions were included for accident insurance and medical care. This contract became the model for those signed by Greek, Portuguese and Italian workers. After mid-1916, contracts generally included the proviso that foreigners were to receive wages equal to French workers.[14]

Transport to France was organised by SCMOE in cooperation with local French consular officials. Upon arrival, the immigrants were sent

to the processing station in Marseille and from there sent by public officials to employers throughout the country. They were generally directed towards low-wage regions of France and into jobs that had the greatest difficulty attracting French workers. European immigrant workers enjoyed a certain amount of freedom, being able to choose their own living situations, for example. Yet the French state watched over them closely. The Foreign Labour Service kept a staff of interpreters, not only to facilitate the introduction of the immigrants into France, but also to monitor their opinions. Military authorities carefully censored their letters home (postal censorship was general during the conflict). The government also attempted to control where immigrants worked, so as to counteract their tendency to seek higher paying jobs by moving to the cities, especially to Paris. After June 1916, it gave all foreign workers identity cards which specified a limited area in which they could travel, and new regulations centralising and reinforcing the identity card system were added in 1917. The system itself derived from pre-war restrictions on the movements of foreigners in France.

In seeking thus to control the lives of European immigrant workers, the French government attempted not only to gain the maximum benefit from their labour, but also to limit the impact of a foreign population during time of war. The success of these measures, however, in regulating European immigrants is open to question, especially as far as the Spaniards were concerned.[15]

In contrast, government controls over colonial and Chinese labour in France were much more far-reaching and systematic during the period. The government's basic approach was termed *encadrement*, or regimentation. All aspects of the lives of non-white workers in France were set by SOTC, with an eye to keeping them as isolated from the French population as possible. Like the Greeks, Italians and Portuguese, recruits from North Africa, China and Indochina signed labour contracts when they first enlisted, and were then transported by French ships to Marseille. Unlike European workers, they were grouped into contingents (based on nationality), which were then sent out to various employers. SOTC provided housing and meals for them in barracks which it set up and controlled at the worksites. It also assigned supervisors and interpreters to these work camps, and even attempted to make provision for leisure activities. In contrast to European immigrant workers, who led their own private lives and had some scope to participate in the wider society, non-whites lived and worked in rigorously segregated conditions similar to those experienced by prisoners of war. *Encadrement* reinforced the constrained character of their labour. Moreover, since it applied to the Chinese as well as those from the French empire, it emphasised the salience of skin colour in differentiating between foreign workers.[16]

The contracts governing the labour of immigrants from the colonies

and China were roughly similar. Those signed after September 1916 by North Africans guaranteed them a minimum salary, to be kept equal to the wages received by similarly qualified French workers. Benefits also included housing and food (the cost of which was deducted from workers' salaries), free transport to and from France, free medical care and bonuses for signing up and re-enlisting. Workers were obliged to accept barracks life and discipline and to agree to return home upon expiration of their contracts, which varied in length from three months to a year. To a greater extent than the North Africans, workers from Indochina and Madagascar came from colonial military reserves and were thus subject to military discipline. After the beginning of 1916, even civilian workers in France from these colonies were brought under formal military control. Their conditions closely resembled those of North Africans, with the exception that they contracted to remain in France until six months after the end of the war.[17]

Although the Chinese came from a country not subject to the French, they were administered by SOTC in conditions similar to those of colonial workers. Like them, after January 1917, Chinese workers signed contracts stipulating a fixed wage (minus costs for housing, food, clothing and medical care) in theory equal to that of French workers, plus free transport. They also lived in isolated, tightly regulated labour camps. Employers utilising colonial and Chinese workers paid their wages and benefits, plus a small sum (per worker per day) to the government.[18]

Officials of SOTC, CIMO and other government organisations advanced several reasons for the regimentation of colonial and Chinese labour. One was the need to guarantee greater productivity; many employers complained that non-white workers were lazy and/or inefficient and would only give a decent output if strictly controlled. This was alleged especially about the Chinese, for whom regimentation was not implemented initially but developed gradually. Language differences and the need for interpreters also underlay arguments for this system. However, fears of contacts between non-whites and French society constituted the basic justification for *encadrement*. This concern had at least two aspects. One was a paternalistic desire to avoid 'corrupting' the natives with European practices. In advocating the regimentation of all Indochinese workers, colonial inspector Salles argued:

> The organisation of civilian workers is defective. Our Indochinese are too inexperienced in western ways to be abandoned to their own devices in the middle of a population from whom they are so different. They need to be guided and held with a benevolent but firm hand. In any case, military regimentation applied with moderation by colonial or metropolitan officials is better for them than absolute liberty...[19]

Officials frequently mentioned the dangers posed by alcoholism and prostitution to colonial workers. However, colonial authorities in particular feared contamination by such social 'dangers' as high wages, unions, strikes and political activism, which such workers might bring back home with them.[20]

Perhaps more important to SOTC was the desire to preserve French society from contact with a large non-white population. One report on importing Chinese labour alleged the social problems its introduction had created in the United States and other countries. In particular, public authorities noted the possibility of conflicts with French workers. Such a possibility was real but, in some ways, intensified by regimentation. In addition, SOTC hoped to prevent contacts between non-white labourers and French women.[21]

Regimentation

In spite of the paternalist platitudes offered by French authorities, the regimentation of colonial and Chinese labour made their working and living conditions in France worse, not better. For example, the tight control exercised over these workers had the effect of keeping their wages artificially low. Their contracts generally specified their wages (5 francs per day for the Chinese, for example), and guaranteed them parity with the French. These wage levels initially reflected prevailing salaries, but France's high wartime inflation levels soon made a mockery of them. French workers were able to win some wage increases, compensating partly for the rise in the cost of living. By 1918, unskilled dock workers, even in an area as cheap as Corsica, were earning 7 francs a day (not including plentiful overtime pay), and demanding 9.[22] Since colonial and Chinese workers never received wage increases or cost of living allowances, they soon became the most poorly paid workers in France. Reports on the conditions of Indochinese workers in 1916 and Chinese workers in 1917 concluded that both groups were paid less than their French co-workers. Unlike European immigrants, they lacked the opportunity to leave low-paying positions for more remunerative ones.[23]

In addition to keeping the wages of non-white workers at the bottom of the pay scale, regimentation also worked to concentrate them in the least desirable occupations. Most immigrants in France during the war, both European and non-European, lacked appreciable industrial skills. Although both groups were brought to France to work for the war effort, colonial workers more often ended up in munitions plants, whereas most of the Spaniards spent the war on French farms, and many Portuguese worked either there, in construction or on the railroads. Of all the Europeans, the Greeks were most likely to take jobs in munitions plants. In contrast, 40 per cent of the Chinese, 41 per

cent of the North Africans, 69 per cent of the Indochinese and 83 per cent of the Madagascans worked in armaments and aviation plants, almost always as unskilled labour. Regimentation enabled the French to send non-white workers where they were most needed, which is to say into the jobs no one else wanted.[24]

The munitions plants paid high wages, but often at the cost of difficult work and unsafe conditions. Colonial and Chinese workers, however, could not benefit from the former because of their contracts and regimented status, but they experienced the latter in full measure. A report on the conditions of North African workers in the Lyons region, submitted to the senate in June 1917, detailed some of these problems:

> These young men furnish 10 hours of labour every 24 hours, employed in loading large munitions shells, alternating between day and night work. However, given the average age of these youths, it is impossible to ask for 10 hours of work, usually very heavy work, in one day. This loading work is difficult, exhausting; the shells are very heavy for these young arms; the nights are cold and their lungs are used to the hot, dry air of Algeria and Morocco.[25]

In May 1917, an inspector visiting the Bassens (Gironde) powder magazine interviewed several workers from Annam who not only complained of the heavy nature of their work and the deleterious effects of noxious gases, but also claimed that Indochinese workers had been systematically substituted for their French colleagues in the most difficult jobs in the factory.[26]

Regimentation also adversely affected the living conditions of colonial and Chinese workers, especially the quality of housing and food. Employers were obliged to supply the latter, but government officials regulated both closely. SOTC officials believed that grouping their workers together in residential barracks was vitally important to prevent both absenteeism and contacts with French civilians. The introduction of large numbers of these workers into munitions and other factories meant straining already overburdened housing facilities to the utmost. Since French officials often refused to build new housing for people who would be leaving at the end of the war, colonial and Chinese workers were usually lodged in old military barracks, disused areas in factories or other makeshift accommodation. New buildings were usually poorly constructed, with inadequate foundations, ventilation and heating. Workers slept on camp beds crammed together, often with no storage space for personal effects. Poor construction, drainage and ventilation meant poor sanitation, with damaging effects on the health of those living in the barracks. In April 1917, a French doctor who inspected a labour camp housing 1,500 workers, mostly Kabyles, counted more than 1,200 visits over a nine-day period to the local

infirmary. Most of those treated complained of bronchitis or overwork. One out of every nine residents of the camp was hospitalised during this period.[27]

Food supplies were often less than desirable. Complaints tended to centre around the type of food available and the amount provided for each worker. One of the benefits for colonial and Chinese workers of the regimentation system was supposed to be the opportunity to provide each nationality with the kinds of food its people were used to, rather than forcing them to adapt to French cuisine. SOTC drew up detailed directives emphasising the importance of providing Chinese workers with rice and tea instead of bread and coffee, for example. Employers did not always follow these directives; some North Africans complained that they were forced to eat pork.[28]

However, the quantity of food supplied provoked a far greater number of complaints. Usually the contracts signed by colonial and Chinese labourers spelled out exactly how much each individual was to get on a daily basis. As the French government began to ration food for its own citizens in response to wartime shortages, officials decided that non-white workers should not be exempt from such privations and, consequently, began to reduce their supplies accordingly. Chinese workers in Bordeaux, for example, saw their daily ration of flour shrink from the 1,000 grams specified in their contracts to 300 grams by February 1918.[29] The government justified this policy change in terms of fairness towards the French civilian population:

> It is inadmissible, in effect, that the equal treatment between French and colonial workers constantly upheld in terms of wages not be applied when it is a question of disadvantageous measures.
>
> Moreover, problems would arise if French workers believed ... that colonial labour benefited from a special diet.
>
> In addition, the ration of 1,000 grams of flour was always excessive, many instances of the waste of bread by colonial workers having been observed.[30]

Difficulties in procuring adequate food and shelter were hard facts of life for all workers in France during the first world war. However, it seems clear that colonial and Chinese workers suffered more from these shortages than either French workers or European immigrants, simply because the latter groups had more choices. Employers built or otherwise provided housing as cheaply as possible for non-white workers, who had little or no opportunity to seek shelter elsewhere. Similarly, it was easier to control the food supplies of those limited to eating in barracks canteens than those with access to grocery stores and restaurants. Even by 1918, food rationing in France was an imperfect, incomplete system at best. In any event, the low wages that the regimentation system forced upon colonial and Chinese workers restricted their options. In

spite of SOTC's proclaimed emphasis on equality, regimentation in fact prevented it, placing non-white workers firmly at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder in wartime France.

Finally, regimentation meant that colonial and Chinese workers experienced much more direct supervision than European immigrants, and came into conflict with them more often. SOTC employed a number of different officials, including soldiers and civilian employees drawn from colonial administrations as well as interpreters, to work directly with these labour groups and watch over their conduct. In actual fact, SOTC had great difficulty in recruiting administrators experienced in working with peoples from outside Europe; the shortage of interpreters was an especially severe problem. As a result, situations frequently arose in which prejudice reinforced by misunderstanding led to conflict. Frustrated by what they perceived as the laziness and inattention of colonial workers, French officials would at times resort to physical force. The internal correspondence of SOTC contains several allegations of administrators hitting their charges – enough to prompt headquarters to send out a directive, in March 1918, denouncing such practices. Officials also used sanctions to enforce discipline. One Tunisian worker complained of being forced to spend fifteen days in prison for refusing to eat pork, while an Indochinese wrote that sending postcards depicting nude French women was punishable by a month in jail. One of the bases of the regimentation system was the desire to ensure discipline among colonial and Chinese workers, and both licit and illicit punishments were thus integral to its operation.[31]

Government officials carefully censored the letters sent by immigrant workers to friends and family at home, in order to monitor their general state of mind and guard against disloyal thoughts and actions. These letters reveal that non-white workers were well aware of their low status and had a lot to say about it. Since the censors only copied sections of certain letters, tending to emphasise those that expressed dissatisfaction, they cannot be read as a representative sample of the views of colonial and Chinese workers. However, they are invaluable in demonstrating how at least some of them considered their situation in France. Complaints about the poor quantity and quality of the food, about the harsh climate (and, consequently, about inadequate clothing and shelter), and about the hard labour demanded are the most frequent. At times, the authors also decry the attitudes of the French towards them, and mention conflicts between different nationalities, or between non-white workers and the French. In general, the image that emerges is of people caught in a harsh, bewildering situation:

> Oh my eye, let the tears flow! My heart is grieved by the separation from Zalah and from Senaim. Oh my heart, cry for my separation

> from my father! The infidels have taken me by force ... now I wander with a shovel or a pickaxe in my hand ... I work like a condemned man in coal mines and limestone quarries ... I work from morning to night with infidels who have no pity on us; they are the enemies of religion.[32]

Colonial and Chinese workers did more to protest against their conditions than write letters. There were numerous instances of brief work stoppages, and some more organised strikes, at factories employing non-white labour. In February 1918, about thirty Moroccans employed at a laundry near Epinal struck for several days to protest their insufficient food rations. Chinese workers, in particular, had a reputation for militancy. The thousand employees of the Holtzer munitions plant in Unieux engaged in several strikes during the summer of 1917. At times, such movements scored small and temporary successes, but, on the whole, they did little to alter the poor conditions under which workers of colour lived and worked in France during the first world war.[33]

Any analysis of the regimentation system would be incomplete, however, without a consideration of French racism as manifested towards non-white workers. Such racist attitudes both motivated and were reinforced by the regimentation system, and cannot be separated from it.

Racism and regimentation

Hostility to foreign workers and foreigners in general was nothing new in France. French workers, in particular, had often reacted antagonistically, even violently, to outsiders in their midst during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although one can find instances of prejudice against non-white workers in France in this period, since there were so few of them, most anti-foreign sentiment was directed against Italians, Belgians, Germans and other European immigrants. This antagonism ranged from name-calling to full-scale riots. At the turn of the century, Italians were the favourite target for xenophobic violence. In the provençal town of Aigues-Mortes in 1893, a fight between French and Italian salt workers turned into a major attack on the local Italian community, during which up to fifty people died and 150 were injured. Gypsies, Belgians and other foreigners also experienced violent attacks by French mobs.[34]

On the surface, such a history supports the view that xenophobia is the root cause of French hostility to both white and non-white immigrant workers. However, when one looks at both official attitudes and the views of French workers and the French people as a whole, it is hard to escape the conclusion that colonial and Chinese workers

experienced far greater levels of antagonism than did their European equivalents.

Representatives of the war, colonial and labour ministries, as well as CIMO, SOTC and SCMOE, frequently evaluated the potential benefits of bringing different national groups to work in French wartime industries. In general, Europeans got much higher ratings than non-Europeans and, at the end of the war, government officials agreed that while the former had been very useful, the employment of colonial and Chinese labour was overall a failure. This conclusion was based as much on preconceived ideas as upon actual experiences and results, since non-white workers received primarily negative ratings throughout the war. In August 1916, a detailed War Ministry report on the possibilities offered by colonial and Chinese workers argued that those from Indochina, China and sub-Saharan Africa would probably prove unsuitable, whereas labour from North Africa might be profitably used on a limited, seasonal basis.[35]

A few dominant stereotypes permeate the official literature. First, the conception of non-whites as physically weak was very common. This applied especially to Indochinese and, to a lesser extent, to North Africans. One report, for example, said that the Indochinese had no more strength than women, while another emphasised their suitability for work requiring dexterity as opposed to physical force. Increasingly during the war, officials translated this alleged physical deficiency into a moral one, speaking less of weakness and more of laziness. Officials and employers accused all groups of this from time to time, but the Chinese were a prime target. The Chinese also had a reputation for insubordination, being considered the non-white workers most likely to protest, refuse to work and get into conflict with the civilian population. In addition, officials often viewed colonial and Chinese workers as morally weak and corruptible. Without strict supervision, it was believed, these people would quickly fall prey to gambling, drink and, most shocking of all, white women.[36]

Underlying these different stereotypes was the tendency of French officials to view Asian and African workers as children: essentially good-natured, yet wayward and sneaky. These infants not only needed but, at bottom, desired firm, paternal discipline from their betters.

> The Madagascan easily lets himself be guided by the European, whose superiority he implicitly recognises. Conducted with firmness and goodwill at the same time, one can get good work from him ... Although intelligent, the Madagascan has little initiative, which explains the small number of industries he has created.
>
> The Madagascan rarely reaches an advanced age. The taste for promiscuity which he often abuses, even from childhood, is for him a cause of degeneracy and abbreviates his days.[37]

The striking similarity of these stereotypes to those formulated by French officials in the empire is no accident. Because of language skills or a more general familiarity with the 'natives', colonial officers often found positions working with colonial and Chinese workers in France. In evaluating these workers, they and SOTC as a whole drew upon ideas already formulated in the colonial context.[38] Experiences in France were interpreted in the context of such preconceptions. For example, inspectors and interpreters would view high rates of illness among these workers as proof of their physical weakness, or see acts of resistance like absenteeism or work stoppages as laziness. They responded to most problems with a call for more discipline and regimentation, rather than questioning the abusive and patronising nature of the system.[39] Within the context of a racist perspective, experiences in both the empire and metropolitan France interacted to produce a view of Africans and Asians as substandard.

Officially expressed concern over the impact of colonial and Chinese labour on French society played an important role in the development of this perspective. Government representatives often justified the regimentation system and a reluctance to use non-white labour in general by alluding to possible social problems that could result from the presence of such workers on French soil.

> Let us note that Chinese immigration has taken place smoothly in those areas without working-class organisation ... On the other hand, difficulties have quickly arisen in other countries, and the example of the United States shows how prudent and necessary it would be to ensure that the introduction of large contingents of Chinese workers into France be surrounded with precautions necessary to prevent any resistance on the part of the working-class population...[40]

Such warnings were based on vague fears rather than on concrete observations, and certain policies adopted by officials dealing with colonial and Chinese workers in wartime France in all probability exacerbated racial tensions with French workers. And, when such tensions and conflicts did arise during the war, non-white workers were confronted with another set of problems.

The first world war represented the first time French working people came into contact with large numbers of non-Europeans on their own territory. Their reactions were not always hostile. Labour inspectors reported instances of French and colonial workers socialising together at cafes after work, or of members of both groups raising money to support an injured co-worker. Several letters written by colonial workers mention friendly treatment by French labourers in their factories. Yet, in general, the two groups had little direct contact with each other, kept apart by the regimentation system as well as by French prejudice.[41]

The French labour movement disapproved of the introduction of all foreign labour into France during the war, only reluctantly accepting it for the sake of the national effort but trying to limit it as much as possible. French unions feared that immigrants would be used to lower wages and worsen working conditions, as well as taking the jobs of French workers and returning veterans. In order to prevent this, unions participated in both CIMO at the national level and in departmental placement offices, raising complaints when they felt foreign workers were impinging on the prerogatives of their members. These complaints targeted both European and non-European immigrants, but reactions against the latter caused the bulk of protests. Moreover, complaints about colonial and Chinese workers at times dealt with issues unrelated to wages and working conditions, as the objections considered in a CIMO meeting reveal:

> The Pas-de-Calais miners union protests ... to the Ministry of Public Works against the use of foreign workers, especially Kabyles, in the mines ... The union raises two objections: one concerning questions of morality, given the close proximity of North Africans to working-class families whose heads are absent; one concerning sanitation inspired by the fear of the possible contamination of the local population. On this last point, it seems that a rigorous medical examination of the North Africans would reassure the local population.[42]

In February 1918, the Bourges metal workers union sent a letter of protest to the Munitions Ministry complaining about the prospect of a future France peopled by foreigners, including what they termed promiscuous peoples of manifestly inferior levels of civilisation.[43]

Reports by various government officials indicate that such sentiments were shared widely by French workers. Many believed that colonial and Chinese workers were used as strikebreakers, and that their introduction made it possible for the government to send more Frenchmen to the front. For example, in June 1917, a colonial worker, Chaouch Ali, was sweeping the Boulevard Saint-Michel in Paris when he was surrounded by French civilians who accused him of performing women's work and of being a shirker. At times, the expression of these feelings went beyond hostile words and gestures, resulting in violent attacks on workers of colour. There were several cases of non-white workers who left their camps to visit local villages and towns at night being beaten up, often by gangs of youths or French soldiers on leave.[44]

Such individual incidents sometimes escalated into full-scale collective violence. One finds indications of numerous scattered race riots from 1916 to the end of the war, but the greatest concentration seems to have taken place during the spring and summer of 1917. During this period, war weariness among the French population suddenly

surfaced in dramatic fashion, with mutinies in the French army and massive strikes in war industries. There were frequent rumours in the spring that colonial soldiers had fired upon striking French workers. Moreover, although strikers made little or no effort to appeal to or include non-whites, many resented their continuing to work.[45]

Rioting took place in Saint-Medard after a strike at the major gunpowder factory there had been broken by the use of Indochinese labour. On 19 June 1917, a quarrel erupted in a Dijon cafe between a French soldier and a Moroccan worker over the latter's mandolin playing; a fight developed, leading French workers to join the fray and attack any Moroccans they could find in the streets of the city, wounding several. By that evening, a crowd of 500-1,500 had surrounded the camp where the Moroccans lived, wildly threatening to tear down its walls and massacre all its inhabitants. Letters from colonial workers during this period are full of allusions to tension and violent conflicts with the French. These tensions relaxed somewhat after October, but racial incidents did not completely disappear.[46]

Economic competition was not the only factor in such conflicts; there was also an important undercurrent of sexual hostility. Both French officials and the French population as a whole reacted strongly to the possibility of sexual relations between non-white workers and French women. Postal censors kept a close look-out for letters from colonial workers mentioning sexual exploits and/or projected engagements to French women, as well as pornographic postcards; their monthly reports often included specific sections devoted to these issues alone. These and other displays of interest in local women could bring disciplinary action. One Indochinese worker at the Saint-Medard gunpowder factory found himself condemned to eight days in prison for the 'crime' of 'having, by gestures, failed to show respect for a young girl'.[47] Complaints about the colonials and Chinese by French workers often alleged promiscuity and the 'danger' posed to local women. An incident related by a Madagascan in Toulouse at the beginning of 1918 shows that non-white workers were well aware of such rivalries.

> Emmanuel Rasafimanjary relates how, upon being stopped by a soldier and two civilians who called him a '*sale negre*' while he was enjoying a peaceful stroll in the company of two women friends, he and a comrade boxed the ears of the Europeans, setting them to flight. He adds that such incidents occur frequently, the French being very jealous of the favours shown to Madagascans by women.[48]

Regimentation tended to promote French working-class racism against colonial and Chinese labour. By keeping the wages of the latter especially low, it reinforced French fears about the impact of these new workers on their own incomes. These fears were not without grounds; some French officials wanted to use colonial labour precisely to prevent

wage increases. In asking for 100 colonial workers in March 1918, an administrator of the port of Bordeaux noted that 'this native labour will help to regulate the price of civilian labour, and act as a brake upon the underhanded but continual agitation of the dockers, who are always trying to impose their will by using the threat of strikes.[49]

Racism occupied a central position in French attitudes towards colonial and Chinese workers during the first world war, in contrast to attitudes towards European immigrants. Stereotypes of, and hostility towards, the latter persisted, but did not result in the kinds of conflicts outlined above. I have not found any indications of riots between them and French workers, for example, in contrast to the situation in France at the turn of the century. Rather, it seems that the wartime experience remoulded traditional French xenophobia into racism and directed it almost exclusively against non-white workers. In this instance, economic rivalries and cultural prejudices combined to entrench the colour line as a salient division of working-class life.

The French experiment with the use of non-white labour came to a screeching halt with the end of the war. After the Armistice, North Africans, in particular, were rounded up in police raids in Paris and Marseille and quickly repatriated. By 1921, only about 25,000 colonial and Chinese workers remained in France, often illegally.[50] During the inter-war years, many North Africans continued to work in France, but usually as seasonal labour and only in the worst jobs, when white workers could not be found. Asian immigration was almost entirely terminated. In contrast, both individual French employers and the state recruited Europeans heavily, bringing to France large populations of Polish and Italian immigrants in the 1920s. While France's foreign population was larger than ever in the inter-war years, public and private authorities successfully purged it of the most 'troublesome' elements and restored a semblance of European homogeneity.[51]

The conclusion of France's wartime use of foreign labour reinforces the observation that it was fundamentally shaped by distinctions based upon race and colour, and underlines the need to take both race and class into account in any analysis of the condition of immigrant workers. The racism that confronted colonial and Chinese workers suggests that something more than xenophobia was at work and contradicts the myth that France was ever a colour-blind nation.

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4 Charles Ageron, *Les Algeriens musulmans et la France, 1871-1919*, 2 vols (Paris, 1968), vol.II, p.1158; Mireille Favre, 'Un milieu porteur de modernisation: travailleurs et tirailleurs vietnamiens en France pendant la première guerre mondiale' (thèse de doctorate, 2 vols, École Nationale des Chartes, Paris, 1986), vol.I, pp.47-52; Nogaro and Weil, op.cit., pp.18-19; P. Wou, *Les traveilleurs chinois et la grande guerre* (Paris, 1939). On the Truptil mission, see the documents in the Archives Nationales [hereafter AN], series F 14 11334, from February 1917.

5 Nogaro and Weil, op.cit., p.25.

6 Horne, op.cit., pp.68-75.

7 Ageron, op.cit., vol.II, 1158; Archives Nationales Section Outre Mer [hereafter ANSOM], Direction des Services Militaires, Carton 5, decree of 31 January 1917. I would like to thank Mme Dominique Taff for her assistance in gaining access to this source.

8 Cited in Favre, op.cit., vol.I, p.241.

9 Service historique de l'armée de terre [hereafter SHAT], 7 N 997, letter from Rakotomango, July-August 1917.

10 Favre, op.cit., vol.I, pp.241-57.

11 SHAT 7 N 1001, letter from Belkacem ben Dieb to Abdallah Ben Ahmed, March 1918.

12 Favre, op.cit., vol.I, pp.201-30; Ageron, op.cit., vol.II, pp.1158-9; Augustin Bernard, *L'Afrique du Nord pendant la guerre* (Paris, 1926), pp.4-5. There were also major anti-French riots in China during late 1916 and early 1917, in both Tientsin and Shanghai. As in Algeria, one cause seems to have been the rumour that men recruited for labour would actually be used as soldiers. AN AP 94 135, report of 17 February 1917.

13 Nogaro and Weil, op.cit., pp.18-25, 43-9; Horne, op.cit., pp.61-2; Cross, op.cit., pp.34-44. Many of the minutes for CIMO meetings are contained in AN F 14 11334.

14 Nogaro and Weil, op.cit., pp.32-5; Cross, op.cit., pp.38-9.

15 Horne, op.cit., p.66; Cross, op.cit., p.40.

16 Nogaro and Weil, op.cit., pp.18-24; Cross, op.cit., pp.34-6; Vidalenc, op.cit., pp.535-8; Favre, op.cit., vol.II, pp.425-63. For archival sources on the regimentation system, see AN F 14 11331, 11332, 11334; AN 94 AP 135, 140; SHAT 5 N 134, 6 N 149, 7 N 144, 17 N 156.

17 Nogaro and Weil, op.cit., pp.5-9; Ageron, vol.II, op.cit., p.1158; Favre, vol.I, op.cit., pp.93-102.

18 Wou, op.cit., pp.17-22; AN F 14 11334, 'Documents sur le recrutement d'ouvriers chinois', CIMO, 19pp., 24 February 1917.

19 AN 94 AP 135, report of 10 December 1915, pp.32-3.

20 AN F 14 11334, report of 26 May 1917, p.3; SHAT 7 N 1001, letter from Sadok-ed-Dakak to Ahmed Soula, 21 July 1916; ANSOM SLOTFOM I, carton 8, December 1917.

21 AN 94 AP 135, 'Note relative au recrutement de la main-d'ouevre coloniale Nord-Africaine et Chinoise', 16 August 1916.

22 AN F 14 1134, letters of 9 April 1918, 14 October 1918.
23 AN 94 AP 135, report by Inspector Salles, 5 March 1916; SHAT 10 N 63, report of 23 January 1917.
24 Nogaro and Weil, op.cit., p.25. These percentages are based upon statistics from 1 October 1918.
25 SHAT 10 N 63, report of M. Cazeneuve, 20 June 1917, p.3.
26 ANSOM SLOTFOM 10, carton 2, 'Rapport sur le groupement de travailleurs indochinois...', 23 May 1917.
27 SHAT 10 N 63, Cazeneuve report, pp.5-6, letter of Dr Bergeret.
28 SHAT 7 N 1001, letters from Mohammed Baccouch, Sadek ben Mohamed and Driss Cherif, June 1917; letter from E. Sadok, March 1918.
29 AN F 14 11331, letter of 2 February 1918.
30 Ibid., letter of 1 February 1918.
31 Ibid., 'Interdiction de frapper en aucun cas les travailleurs Chinois et Coloniaux', 1 March 1918; SHAT 7 N 997, letter from Son, August 1917.
32 SHAT 7 N 1001, letter from Ali ben Ismail to Abdel-Aziz, December 1917. On the postal commissions and the letters of colonial workers, see Horne, op.cit.; Favre, op.cit, vol.II, pp.467-502.
33 SHAT 17 N 157, letter of 2 March 1918; AN 94 AP 140, telephone messages of 5 and 17 July 1917.
34 Noiriel, op.cit., pp.258-62; Michelle Perrot, 'Les rapports entre ouvriers français et etrangers (1871-1893)', *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire moderne* (1960).
35 AN 94 AP 135, report of 16 August 1916. See also various reports contained in the CIMO files in AN F 14 11334.
36 SHAT 7 N 144, report of 20 February 1916; SHAT 17 N 156, reports of 27 April and 12 May 1918; AN F 14 11331, letters of 14 September, 21 September and 22 October 1917, 8 February, 17 April, 10 July, 22 August and 11 December 1918.
37 SHAT 7 N 997, 'Rapport Mensuel', July-August 1917.
38 On French imperial images of indigenous Third World peoples, see Cohen, op.cit.; William Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses: the French popular image of Africa, 1870-1900* (London, 1982); Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory* (New York, 1961); Thomas August, *The Selling of the Empire* (London, 1985); Ada Martinkus-Zemp, *Le blanc et le noir* (Paris, 1975).
39 AN F 14 11331, report of 24 June 1918; SHAT 17 N 156, letter of 20 October 1918.
40 AN 94 AP 135, report of 16 August 1916, p.19.
41 ANSOM SLOTFOM 10, carton 2, reports of 27 August 1916, 28 May 1917; SLOTFOM 1, carton 8, report of February 1918; SHAT 7 N 1001, letter from Sadok to Sadok Lageldi, 13 November 1917, letter from Ali ben Ammar to El-Acharri ben Mrad, 25 December 1917.
42 AN F 14 11334, report of 7 July 1917.
43 Cited in Vidalenc, op.cit., p.540. The month before, M. Cauet, secretary general of the union, declared that it was humiliating for French workers to be forced to train those (Indochinese) of an inferior race. SHAT 6 N 149, letter of 29 January 1918.
44 ANSOM SLOTFOM 10, carton 2, reports of 26 July and 4 September 1917; ANSOM DSM, carton 5, reports of 19 and 20 June 1917; SHAT 7 N 997, letter from Cang Xuong to Sang, August 1917, report of August 1917; AN 94 AP 135, telephone messages of 22 January and 19 June 1917; AN F 14 11334, report of 9 June 1917.
45 See the numerous reports contained in ANSOM DSM cartons 5 and 6; also Favre, op.cit., vol.II, pp.508-23; Horne, op.cit., pp.84-6.
46 ANSOM DSM, carton 5, reports of 20 June 1917 by Temsil and Benaich; ANSOM SLOTFOM 10, carton 2, reports of 25 July, 30 July, 1 August, and 10 August 1917.
47 ANSOM SLOTFOM 10, carton 2, 'Groupement des travailleurs indochinois de Saint-Medard-en-Jalles', report for the month of September 1917.
48 ANSOM SLOTFOM 1, carton 8, 'Contrôle postal malgache', February 1918. In

their correspondence colonial workers commented frequently on their relations with French women.,

49 AN F 14 11331, letter of 21 March 1918.

50 Cross, op.cit., p.123. On the extraordinarily thorough repatriation of the Indochinese, see Favre, op.cit., vol.II.

51 Cross, op.cit.; Georges Mauco, *Les étrangers en France* (Paris, 1932).

DENNIS DEAN

The Conservative government and the 1961 Commonwealth Immigration Act: the inside story

Just over thirty years ago, legislation was enacted which proved a crucial landmark in race relations in Britain: it was the first of a series of Commonwealth Immigration Acts. A spate of work, using government archives, has uncovered the rising concern in official circles about the numbers of immigrants coming to Britain from the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent in the early 1950s. Most of this work has concentrated on the years until 1955,[1] and has only speculated on the influences that ultimately decided the Macmillan government to control immigration in 1961. This article offers more concrete explanations, based on the most recently accessible government records.

Earlier work has provided valuable insights into the thinking processes of those in power in the late 1950s. Most importantly, it has demonstrated that it was only a matter of time before *some* measure of control was introduced if the number of immigrants from the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent continued to rise. In the long debates within Cabinet about the introduction of legislation in the key years 1955-56, the conclusion was: 'We are in little doubt that some form of control over coloured immigration will eventually be inescapable. We consider the balance of advantage lies against taking steps to impose this control at the present time.'[2] From 1956, a departmental committee, largely dominated by officials from the Home Office and Labour and Housing ministries met at regular intervals and reported, in turn, to a powerful Cabinet committee first presided over by the Lord Chancellor and then by the Home Secretary.

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It was this group of ministers who continued to weigh up 'the balance of advantage'. On one side were those mainly concerned with domestic matters who were leaning ever more heavily in favour of control. They were prevented from moving in this direction by the Commonwealth and Colonial Office representatives who, fearing dangerous consequences to Commonwealth relations by precipitate action, advised, on the whole, delay and caution whenever legislation loomed.

Care, too, needed to be taken in using a description such as unrestricted entry in the 1950s. There was surprisingly little enthusiasm on the Conservative side for what might be seen as a major plank of the market economy: the right of labour to move to new areas experiencing labour shortages. Doubts were constantly raised about the suitability of workers from the West Indies and, later, India and Pakistan for British industry. Employers, contemplating dealing with their labour shortages by recruitment drives in these countries, were given little encouragement from the Ministry of Labour, which reported to an interdepartmental enquiry: 'The attitude of employers varies considerably from place to place but most employers today are reluctant to engage coloured workers and firms which two or three years ago would have employed them refuse to do so now.'[3] Its advice to ministers was clear. It would not contemplate quotas in factories and workshops, but would raise no objection to curtailing the entry of colonial immigrants at source. For its part, the Colonial Office, while resisting legislation, issued warnings to governors that, if they did nothing to stop numbers leaving the shores of their colonies, controls were certain to come. The information given to would-be immigrants was distinctly discouraging, stressing cold winters, unsatisfactory employment, poor accommodation prospects and even the peculiarity of English customs. Attempts were made by dubious administrative devices to 'weed out' criminal elements, stowaways and 'undesirables'. The Commonwealth Office, for its part, worked ceaselessly after 1955 to secure agreements with the Asian Dominions to restrict the numbers of people leaving their shores.

It was widely accepted by all government departments involved that these immigrants found serious difficulties in securing accommodation or employment in Britain. Allegations of serious discrimination at the workplace, in housing and in leisure activities were frequently ignored by ministers and officials. Those who came from the 'New' Commonwealth were expected 'to go it alone' and fend for themselves. It was argued that legislation against acts of racial discrimination was unworkable and unenforceable.

The governments of the 1950s have also been accused of remaining inactive in the provision of resources and initiatives to settle new groups in the country. Charges have been made that the needs of these groups for social centres, advisory agencies and, above all, housing

trusts were neglected. This ignores two important considerations. All these activities, it was feared, would encourage more immigrants to arrive. Secondly, immigrants would probably congregate in areas of high concentration where such centres were likely to be established first and this would discourage speedy dispersal. For this reason, the Cabinet Committee on Commonwealth Immigration declined to support resources for housing trusts to alleviate accommodation problems in areas like Notting Hill. It argued that 'as long as immigration remained unrestricted, the use of public funds for that purpose could only serve as an added attraction to prospective immigrants and would frustrate the efforts we were encouraging Commonwealth and Colonial governments to make to reduce the rate of emigration from their territories to the United Kingdom'.[4]

Immigration policy linked up to other issues that, particularly after 1955, were under review in government circles and were causing concern. The scale of the post-war welfare state was a growing anxiety. Lord Salisbury, for example, voiced fears about the effects of both welfarism and Commonwealth immigration on British society, and brought the two issues together. The growing wave of immigration, in his view, would not fall even if employment prospects diminished, since it was the 'pull' of welfare benefits that had become the attraction. In these circumstances, Conservative ministers were unlikely to look kindly at any ambitious programme of assistance.

In the late 1950s, indirect pressures continued to be seen as the most satisfactory way of ensuring less immigration – the fact that numbers dropped in 1959 from the Indian subcontinent appeared to justify this approach. The Commonwealth and Colonial secretaries, who remained important in maintaining this position, argued that such pressures would be less likely to create conflict with the new forces in the Commonwealth. Although, in retrospect, the Macmillan government has been viewed as engineering great changes in Britain's role in the world, it was a difficult period of transition. Decolonisation, it was argued, need not necessarily lead to the loss of British influence and trade in Asia and Africa if handled well. The concept of a multiracial Commonwealth, however nebulous and ill-defined, was used ceaselessly to try to bind former British territories together. The image, if not the reality, of unrestricted entry to the 'mother country' was often seen as a cornerstone of this ideal.

Decolonisation did not proceed as smoothly as ministers would have desired. In various parts of the globe, the Macmillan government faced tortuous 'unfinished business'. Kenya, the proposed Central African Federation and the attempt to bind the scattered West Indian possessions into some kind of federation all caused difficulties. The presence of an increasingly entrenched apartheid administration in South Africa did nothing to unite the older and newer parts of the

Commonwealth. Many of these problems involved issues of deep racial discrimination. Any premature sign that the British government was about to introduce restrictive legislation, therefore, presented dangers to orderly and successful decolonisation. The Cabinet, as a result, heeded the advice to watch events in these areas closely: 'There will be special difficulties introducing legislation at the present time, when the Government was striving in the constitutional discussions with Southern Rhodesia to secure safeguards against racial discrimination and when in the West Indies progress was being made towards the building of a constitutional conference leading towards the independence of the Federation.'[5]

West Indian politicians such as Eric Williams were not averse to making threats of impending catastrophes if Macmillan yielded to pressure for control. Williams warned Macmillan: 'if [Britain] were to withdraw her support and stop West Indian immigration, there would be a social revolution and a Cuban situation in the West Indies.'[6] Delays in revealing eventual legislation policy scarcely gained the government credit either inside the Commonwealth or on the domestic front. Ministers, when pressed at various conferences with West Indian leaders on future intentions, offered evasive replies. Before Macmillan's visit to the West Indies, the Colonial Office, ever anxious to prevent trouble breaking out on this issue, advised him to reply to any probing questions 'that we were watching the situation carefully, that while we see no cause for any alarm at present we remain anxious about any serious recession'.[7] Tactics of this kind angered figures like Grantly Adams, chief minister designate of the West Indian Federation, who protested bitterly when he eventually received news of proposed legislation.[8] The government, clearly put on the defensive on the charge of inadequate and misleading consultation, concluded: 'On this point, it would be advisable to admit that the extent of the consultation had not been as great as could have been wished and to explain that over a long period the government had sought to avoid imposing this control.'[9] At home, Conservative critics were increasingly alarmed at signs of drift which the government appeared to be displaying on a number of fronts in the early 1960s. Sir Robert Renwick expressed uneasiness about lack of action on introducing controls, warning Central Office: 'But people are getting very tired with the perpetual watching of the whole situation with care: and we are hoping that a firm conclusion will be reached before it is too late.'[10]

* * *

Some of the Commonwealth constraints were slipping away in 1961. First, the proposed West Indian Federation, strongly supported in London, was rejected by the most important islands. Macleod, the

Colonial Secretary, could thus inform his colleagues: 'It was no longer necessary to hold up the Government's decision on account of constitutional developments in the West Indies. Jamaica had decided by its referendum to withdraw from the West Indian Federation.'[11] Moreover, the likelihood of the Central African Federation coming into existence became ever more distant as resistance among the African population mounted. In these circumstances, Macleod's stance became clear. As a realistic politician, his advice was to get the legislation carried as quickly as possible. Delay would only lead to more ill-will and, eventually, to more criticism of the government at home and abroad. His cautious stance on immigration control came to an end. Arguments began to be heard that rising immigration created communal tension and caused dangerous disturbances.

It must not be forgotten that the two departments most closely in touch with the feelings and susceptibilities of colonial and Commonwealth leaders were now beginning to decline in authority. As the various Dominions pursued ever more independent foreign policies, the Foreign Office (FO) increasingly committed itself to taking over the 'territory' of the Commonwealth Office. The news that the Soviet propaganda machine was exploiting racial incidents in Britain disturbed senior FO officials. Decolonisation, however drawn out, also signalled the decline of influence of the Colonial Office. By 1961, the commitment of these two departments to continue to delay legislation was drawing to a close.

Throughout their deliberations in the later 1950s, ministers agonised about public opinion. Macmillan's government was very sensitive to signs of changing moods in the country. A number of reasons can be attributed to this. Most of the senior ministers lived under the memory of 1945, when the Conservatives were deemed to have misread the state of public opinion. Despite Conservative victories in 1951 and 1955, the electoral situation remained tight, so that small shifts of opinion might be decisive. It was not deemed a time for hasty, reactive decisions. An all-party delegation which pressed for a minister to be appointed to take responsibility for immigration policy in the aftermath of the troubles in Nottingham and Notting Hill received a negative response: 'Little was to be gained ... by such an appointment apart from its psychological value.'[12] Errors of judgment in sensitive areas threatened danger. Ministers were pulled in two directions. Sections of professional, academic and cultural opinion, often represented by the major weeklies and national newspapers, were certain to oppose the ending of free entry. Macleod was resigned to this by 1961: 'Whatever we devise will certainly meet some criticism from the Opposition and some lofty comments from *The Times*...'[13] On the other hand, in the period leading to the 1959 election, a contrary view, influenced by public unease at the Suez fiasco, held sway: 'Legislation would be popular in

some parts of the country, but was it politically wise to undertake such a controversial measure when a period of electoral consolidation was necessary?'[14]

Senior ministers struggled to come to terms with a new political world as the 1950s drew to a close. First, there had been a communications revolution symbolised by the rapid rise in television ownership and the introduction of commercial television. This had introduced different styles of presenting issues, opening out closed territory and popularising contentious topics. It was also an age of new marketing techniques, with the advent of public relations, sampling and presentation packaging. In this situation, it was more difficult to use older, well-tried ways of 'sounding out' the mood of the public. Party officials from politically sensitive areas pressed for a 'populist' line on immigration control. Thus, the chairman of the West Midlands Union congratulated the new Conservative Party chairman on his sympathetic response to calls for legislation: 'You certainly acted very promptly in getting in touch with the PM and other ministers about the influx of coloured peoples into the country and it would be a splendid start for you as chairman if some positive action could be taken which would show that they would definitely have a voice in the policies of the party.'[15] Ministers were under constant pressure from constituency activists who feared that, if decisive action was not taken, valuable votes would be lost to splinter groups.

Faced with electoral and Commonwealth considerations, most ministers clung to the indirect approach, which, of itself, implied that immigration was a matter to be dealt with outside the glare of publicity. But not all ministers had accepted that delaying tactic. Churchill, when prime minister, was less than happy at such inaction. Salisbury's earlier sombre warnings to his colleagues about the peril of uncontrolled immigration had also left their mark on younger politicians.[16] However, a patrician to his bones, he had declined to break ranks and try to force an open debate.

Macmillan conveyed little of his own thinking on this issue in his extensive memoirs. He claimed that 'no action was taken until the matter was brought forcibly to public attention by the so-called race riots which had taken place first in the Midlands at Nottingham and afterwards in London at Notting Hill'.[17] He overlooked the fact that he had earlier pressed Eden to open up negotiations with the Labour Opposition on possible legislation. He talked of 'ventilating' the problem, adding: 'The Lord Chancellor told me that Lord Listowel would be prepared to raise the issue in a friendly way. I am surprised at this. I should have thought he would be in favour of mixing up black and white.'[18] On the whole, he was content to allow his Home Secretary, Butler, to bear the brunt of the battle, intervening only when the government's own position was threatened. He offered Butler gratitude

'for all the work you are doing on the Immigration Bill'.[19] It suited him to allow his old rival to take the criticisms from impatient Conservative grass-roots opinion, and he recorded later, perhaps not without satisfaction, that Butler 'had some difficulties in this and other issues with members of the Conference, who in my experience, it was always best to treat firmly'.[20] During his aforementioned visit to the West Indies (early 1961), he had skilfully evaded persistent pressure from island leaders to disclose his government's intentions. At the same time, he had tried to use his warming relationship with Kennedy to ease restriction quotas on West Indians going to the USA, quotas which the Colonial Office believed had contributed to rising numbers coming to Britain. Macmillan reported to Sir Grantly Adams: 'As regards migration, any cessation in US immigration over West Indians would be welcome. I elaborated on these points and the President took note of them.'[21]

As always, it was difficult to uncover Butler's own attitude to the proposed legislation. Anthony Howard (later to become his official biographer) indicated his difficulties: 'At least now the line of defence is clear. Mr Butler's heart, we are assured, is not in this type of work.'[22] Butler's tenure at the Home Office was not proving a happy one. There were signs of a moral panic sweeping across Conservative quarters after 1959. Generational conflict, disrupted communities, growing lack of respect for established institutions were contributing to this uneasiness. Macmillan's own ministers were not immune to these fears. Sir David Eccles, the education minister, wrote to Macmillan: 'But, in 1960, anxieties in this sense have been growing among sections of the public. There are signs of sexual promiscuity and violence among the young and that all too few of the parents hold that any absolute values exist.'[23] The Home Secretary found himself under fierce pressure to reassert traditional authority through a range of more severe sanctions and penalties. Attempts to quell these demands often led him into political trouble. His liberal credentials were tarnished by enigmatic statements, while his more conservative critics were acutely displeased by what they saw as evasion.

It was Butler who initiated the Cabinet debates which eventually prepared the way to legislation. In July 1960, he told his colleagues: 'In view of the present extent of coloured immigration from the West Indies and of the strong representations about it which have been made to me by members on both sides of the House, I think it right to bring the matter to the notice of my colleagues.'[24] At this stage, he indicated that his own mind was not made up: 'I continue to hope that administrative pressure may, if it does not provide a solution, at any rate reduce the flow of West Indian immigrants.'[25] Later, he proposed the reconstitution of the Cabinet committee to investigate possible legislation and its difficulties.[26] Within this committee, there was little

sign that he made any strong effort to challenge those pressing for legislation. His main role seems to have been to counsel caution until Commonwealth difficulties had sorted themselves out. After this, his advice was to present the legislation in the way least damaging to the government's image: 'We could not legislate openly on grounds of colour and our best public stand would be, as the Working Party proposed, on employment, although we must recognise that reference to employment would be the means of controlling immigration and not the grounds for doing so.'[27] It was Butler who finally submitted the recommendations of the Commonwealth Immigration Committee to the full Cabinet. In his case for legislation, he presented what was essentially the Home Office view. The case for control, he insisted, rested on 'the strain imposed on housing resources of certain local authorities and the dangers of social tension inherent in the existence of large unassimilated coloured communities'.[28] Thus, he concluded that the possibility of unrest, not fear of unemployment, was the real reason for the decision to act. It did little to help him in his defence of the proposal to introduce a system of labour vouchers.

* * *

Disturbances in August 1958 in Nottingham and Notting Hill have been seen as a turning point in securing the passage of legislation. A number of cautionary points need to be made. It would have been very difficult for a government to appear to respond to rioting per se, least of all a Conservative government with its strong views on law and order. The immediate priority, at the time, was restoration of order, support for the police, punishment of offenders and reassurance to critical West Indian politicians such as Norman Manley, who embarked on a tour of the troubled areas. Although the Home Office had issued warnings about rising social tension throughout the 1950s, attempts were made to isolate the incidents of 1958. In a later progress report, an inter-departmental committee commented: 'Until 23rd August, relations of the island population here with other people gave rise to no particular concern.'[29] What, eventually, the troubles began to reveal were forgotten twilight districts of poor housing, slum schools, the relics of war destruction, in which both the white and the black resident population appeared to be in crisis. For a government about to embark on election preparations which would depend heavily on the appeal of widening post-war affluence, these aspects needed to be handled with minimum publicity. The West Indian population which had been the victims of the attacks did not escape censure. Overcrowding and the supposed activities of certain West Indian landlords were used by ministers to blunt opposition criticisms of poor housing conditions in the affected areas.

The response of government and administrators to these disturbances was therefore complex. It encouraged a range of inquiries and research projects on the various communities and initiatives to bring the communities together. The most important feature of such initiatives was that they were small, ad hoc, and were largely left to the localities themselves. The mayor of Kensington reported on one of these efforts: 'I set up what is called the Mayor's Co-ordinating Committee and this is served by two Working Parties with powers to co-opt interested parties throughout the Borough.'[30] A Christmas party was organised for representatives of the communities. Much hope was placed on the integrating role of education. An inter-party delegation of backbench MPs urged that 'a more positive and vigorous approach was necessary to give children a proper background when they left school'.[31] The colonial secretary's reply revealed some of the period's complacency: 'Colour consciousness was not a problem in the school.'[32] There were sharp divisions between Conservative and Labour on the need for legislation to curb racial incitement. The resurgence of Mosleyite activity in the late 1950s led to fears in Labour circles of a fascist revival. Conservatives continued to insist that, because prejudice could not be abolished by law, any legislation was unenforceable. Labour was already moving away from this position before the riots: 'Recent experience has led the Labour party and many other responsible people and organisations to believe the legislation prohibiting discussion in public places would prevent racial discrimination getting a foothold in the social organisation of this country.'[33]

If the riots did set in train meetings, statements and pamphlets from a wide variety of groups, the government was very selective in its choice of organisations worthy of attention. Defence groups from the black population campaigning for stronger action against racial incitement and fairer treatment from the police were frequently rejected. Throughout 1959, representatives from the West Indies expressed grave concern to government departments about police behaviour in Notting Hill: 'The Commission has received continuously reports of a persistent feeling on the part of West Indians that the police were not impartial.'[34] Incidents such as the killing of Kelso Cochrane in 1959 provoked anger and protests from the local West Indian community which were conveyed to Macmillan. 'So how was it, in view of these warnings, that there was no police present when the crime was committed? and how was it that a police sergeant was authoritatively reported to have said "a nigger stabbed to death by a white man".'[35] Ministers chose to ignore representations of this kind, insisting that they were the work of trouble-making and unrepresentative groups, stirred up by communist agitators. Ministers were content to be assured that progress in relations between the police and black communities was being made in troubled districts: 'In recent weeks

there has been some signs of an improvement in co-operation between the coloured population and the police in the Notting Hill area.'[36]

Much more important in the government's mind in the aftermath of the riots was to act in an even-handed way in dealing with criminal elements. This meant, as we have seen, approval of tough sentencing for rioters. It was also intended that alleged unsocial activities among immigrant groups needed to be condemned – 'Public opinion tends to focus attention on the criminal activities of a small minority in prostitution or those convicted of immoral earnings.'[37] This led, in 1959, to sharp debates in Cabinet about the feasibility of introducing legislation to deport elements who were deemed to have criminal records or who had engaged in acts of criminal behaviour. A measure of this kind presented advantages to a hard-pressed government. It promised to stave off claims for harsher controls likely to be heard in the difficult pre-election period. It also issued a warning to intending immigrants that there was a new toughness emerging in government attitudes. But there were also drawbacks to such limited legislation. West Indian and Asian governments were being put on their guard that more control measures were being contemplated. There was also the danger that the government might possibly lose control of this kind of legislation in the Commons. There were Conservatives who would use the occasion to argue that the major problem was not the presence of criminal elements among the immigrants but the scale of the immigration. In a sense, the 1959 debates rehearsed the issues that were to dominate the discussions in 1961.

* * *

The Conservatives' substantial 1959 election victory removed some possible constraints on whether control legislation should be introduced. The government now had a decisive majority. This did not, however, lead to an easing of problems. From 1960, ministers struggled with a variety of difficult decisions concerning the sluggishness of the economy, the obvious decline in Britain's world position and growing challenges from a restless workforce. The Conservative party was unsettled, divided and suspicious of ministers. This spilt over to the issue of immigration. Increased attention directed at the economy and its failings led to concern about labour supply. The government had chosen to push for a policy of speedy expansion, which created overheating of the economy and consequent dips in employment. Sharp questions began to be asked about the effect of Commonwealth immigration on future employment figures. This was a period when the schools were pouring out large cohorts of young people, the products of the post-war baby boom. The early 1960s also saw the end of compulsory military service, which had absorbed large numbers of

the male population. An influential group of politicians and economists was mounting a powerful campaign to urge new approaches on the government. British industry now required more technically aware, skilled workers rather than a large pool of manual labour, and this meant greater emphasis on training and education. This argument was not lost in the deliberations of the Cabinet committee reviewing Commonwealth immigration in 1961: 'We were not dependent on coloured immigration for economic expansion which, insofar as it was being held up at all was due to a shortage of skilled labour: it could be argued that the continued existence of a pool of unskilled coloured labour inhibited a development of automation.'[38] In this way, the immigrants from the West Indies or Asia, nearly always seen as lacking skills, found themselves incorporated into Britain's growing economic malaise. Not all ministers accepted this argument. Sir Edward Boyle, a Treasury minister and always more liberally minded, made his dissent known, maintaining that 'he was not persuaded of the necessity of doing so on social grounds, and thought the economic advantage of the present level of immigration was overriding'.[39] A supply of immigrants was sometimes argued to be necessary to maintain transport, welfare and other lowly service functions. None of this was likely to sway those who were urgently pressing for strict controls. The Colonial Office brief for Macmillan's West Indies visit portrayed all the rising pessimism about long-term employment prospects: '1962 employment prospects with the end of National Service and a bulge in the number of school leavers are not very hopeful; and even a minor recession might bear hardly on those immigrants who cannot return home, unlike the Irish.'[40]

Fears of social tension were fuelled not only by the domestic troubles in the late 1950s. It was the visual image of disturbances in parts of the USA which, by 1960, came to dominate much thinking on the government side. Butler made these anxieties clear to his colleagues when he declared: 'It was now accepted by government supporters generally that some form of control was unanswerable if there was not to be a colour problem in this country on a similar scale to that of the USA.'[41] Increasingly, Notting Hill and Nottingham fitter a wider world context. They were precursors of troubles as resources became more stretched, authority broke down and leisure for larger sections of the population grew. Britain was supposed to have escaped some of these tensions because of its previous homogeneity. Politicians now feared that such harmony and stability were becoming more fragile. In this light, new communities and new faces were regarded, at best, with suspicion and often with outright hostility.

The Conservative government, in 1961, spent much of its time searching for ways to limit possible damage to its reputation as it discarded unrestricted entry. This led to discussion on the method to

be adopted to exclude Commonwealth citizens. Accommodation problems had created great anxieties in areas of settlement, and suggestions were made that potential immigrants would have to present evidence that they had the offer of housing. Health checks were another issue, with ministers receiving such warnings as: 'My health committee are particularly conscious of the fact that for a number of reasons the immigrants do make a disproportionate claim on the Health Services of the town.'[42] Duncan Sandys was a firm supporter of both housing and health checks on would-be immigrants. The Lord Chancellor put the contrary view: 'The Committee do not think a control based on either a housing certificate or a health check would by itself be effective.'[43]

Labour vouchers for entry appeared to be the most satisfactory and flexible means of controlling entry. The British economy could continue to get the skills it needed and, as it was usually assumed that these would be drawn from the white professional groups in the Commonwealth, the older white Commonwealth would escape restrictions. Such a solution allowed the government to strike a balance. The most rigid supporters of control were calling for the total cessation of West Indian and Asian immigration. The government felt that this was out of the question. A range of labour vouchers, divided into categories, was not likely to satisfy critics on either side of the debate, but might be expected to quieten more moderate opinion which now saw the possibility of controls in place without a resort to total exclusion. Butler's justification of the scheme deserves extensive coverage: 'The great merit of this scheme is that it can be presented as making no distinction on grounds of race and colour, although in practice all would-be immigrants from the old Commonwealth countries would almost certainly be able to obtain authority to enter under category (a) or (b).'[44] He continued: 'We must recognise that, although the scheme purports to relate solely to employment and to be non-discriminatory, its aim is primarily social and its restrictive effect is intended to and would, in fact, operate on coloured people almost exclusively.'[45] It was hoped to disarm those critics who were prepared to attack any legislation on the grounds that it was discriminatory. The approach satisfied senior mandarins in Whitehall – Norman Brook, the Cabinet secretary, informed Macmillan: 'But at least there is no element of racial discrimination in the Bill itself, and the emphasis of the scheme is upon the limitation and not the elimination of coloured immigration.'[46]

The restrictions to be placed on Commonwealth immigration raised the issue of extensive Irish immigration which continued into the 1950s. In Conservative quarters, there was little liking for this group and ministers wanted to restrict their entry. Dublin had allegedly displayed disloyalty in the second world war by its neutrality. In 1948, it had

slipped its last ties with the Commonwealth, while managing to retain right of entry and trading concessions. There was a renewal of IRA activity in 1954-55, reaching the mainland, and, in the view of the Conservative Central Office, concentrations of the Irish-born population in British constituencies strengthened the Labour vote: 'The Southern Irish element was automatically an almost fanatical addition to the socialist following.'[47] Finally, failure to limit white Irish migration would expose the government to the charge that its intention was to strike solely at black West Indians and Asians. Duncan Sandys voiced the general unease of ministers: 'I am unhappy about the idea of giving to citizens of the Irish Republic privileges that will not be enjoyed by Commonwealth citizens, though I see the practical difficulties of imposing solutions.'[48] Ian Macleod informed an anxious Macmillan of the efforts needed to stave off a backbench revolt on the issue when it was revealed that ministers had decided not to include Irish-born in the legislation.[49] Nevertheless, practical difficulties prevailed. Efforts to put up control checks on the borders would be costly and difficult to enforce. It threatened to revive the vexed problem of Northern Ireland.

Ministers did make an attempt to justify the impact of the legislation on race relations in this country. They used a wide variety of arguments to claim that immigration control might well bring improvement. First of all, it would alleviate the fears of white communities and make them less likely to be influenced by extreme racialist groups. The case was also put that, without control, real progress could not be made in integrating existing immigrant communities into the fabric of British society. Suggestions were made that black communities would actually welcome the legislation. 'There was some evidence that those coloured immigrants who were already here were apprehensive about the publicity that a continued large influx would create difficulties likely to improve their own position.'[50] Perhaps the ministers were hoping to use the well-tried device of divide and rule from the days of Empire. In this case, settled established groups would be matched against prospective immigrants. There was little evidence that black people found any of the arguments put forward convincing.

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Throughout the passage of the legislation, the major concern of ministers was the possibility that the Labour opposition and dissident Conservatives would combine to administer a savage rebuff to the government. In the 1950s, the most vociferous opposition to any hint at control had come from figures like Brockway, Sorensen and Driberg, all on the Labour benches. By contrast, the most passionate advocates of control, repeatedly using questions and motions in the

Commons to draw attention to the issue, were Tory backbenchers like Cyril Osborne and Norman Pannell. This did not mean either that Labour was unanimous in opposing control or that all Conservatives favoured the introduction of restrictive legislation. Ministers clearly hoped for divisions on the Labour side to make the legislation easier to pass. Macleod believed that the opposition dared not wage an all-out attack since it was aware that public opinion was moving to support the measure: 'I think it is clear that the Labour party are seeking what are side issues, however important, to concentrate on in this Bill because they know it will be unpopular to oppose or deny the necessity for the Bill.'[51] In these circumstances, the government's tactics became plain. They concentrated on the basic premise of control and, at times, shifted their ground on incidentals. It did not make for impressive parliamentary performances. The *Spectator* was very critical of this approach and the problems caused: 'The Opposition ... attacked it vigorously as did many of the Government's own supporters – the former on the grounds that it was a racialist measure, the latter because it is proposed to drop the hastily included clause which would make the Irish subject to the same controls as Commonwealth citizens.'[52]

In the later 1950s, there was evidence that the Labour party was watching very closely the relationship between white and black communities in this country. First, this was part of the overhaul of policies that had been undertaken since Gaitskell had assumed leadership in 1955. If more emphasis was to be given to equality and access to opportunity rather than capturing the commanding heights of the economy, it was certain that issues such as racial discrimination were likely to be given greater priority in the party's programmes. Second, there was the assumption that these new immigrants would be absorbed into working-class occupations and were thus potential Labour voters. The task, at a local level, was to bring together the older white Labour working-class voter and the new groups. This was less easy than was hoped. The South Paddington Labour party reported strained relations: 'As you are no doubt aware, Paddington is one of the areas in which there has been an influx of West Indians. This has raised considerable resentment among the most backward sections of the population, including unfortunately some sections of our own party.'[53] Other London constituencies such as Vauxhall and Norwood confirmed this uneasiness.[54] The 1958 troubles presented difficulties for Labour. Rioting took place in constituencies represented by Labour MPs. Their position during these incidents was strongly criticised in the liberal press, including the influential *Observer:* 'The easy way out of the difficulty, which two MPs have already advocated, is to stop or severely limit the immigration of coloured people into these islands.'[55] The result of uncertainty about the party's stance led to a meeting between George Rogers, Notting Hill's MP, and an anxious Gaitskell,

at which it was made very clear that, 'whatever local difficulties there may be, nothing can justify the rioting and hooliganism of the last few days'.[56] The troubles in both constituencies were the subject of internal inquiries and the London district organiser's report made gloomy reading. He indicated that 'a somewhat serious political problem in so marginal a constituency is a fairly widespread controversy regarding the position taken up by the Labour MP for North Kensington Mr George Rogers'.[57]

As a result of all these considerations, Gaitskell was determined to intervene much more forcibly on this issue. He was deeply troubled by the Mosley factor and had further meetings with George Rogers 'about the racial problems in [Rogers's] constituency'.[58] Nevertheless, the extent of Gaitskell's passionate and effective opposition to the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigration Bill in 1961 took Conservative ministers by surprise. It is important to note that his position related to his other main preoccupations at the time. He held strongly that the future of world peace in a troubled era depended heavily on the continuation of Britain as a world power. An active Commonwealth, linking black and white, African, Asian and British, was essential for this task. It was vitally important that Britain was not reduced to playing the role of a regional power and, because of this conviction, he believed that efforts to secure entry to the European Community must be resisted. Concentration on a wider Commonwealth ensured that the British would keep their worldwide perspective. Finally, in his bitter struggle against the influence of the CND on the Labour party, there was a fear that there were elements in his own party who were seeking to pull Britain into an isolationist, neutralist, 'Little England' stance. All these factors need to be kept in mind in explaining his intense hostility to the ending of unrestricted entry. Although he often used economic arguments to attack the grounds of control, namely labour vouchers, he never forgot this central preoccupation. The ending of unrestricted entry put the Commonwealth in jeopardy, turned Britain away from worldwide responsibilities and pushed the nation inward. This approach made Gaitskell a dangerous opponent because some of the concerns spilled over into Conservative ranks. Believers in the multiracial Commonwealth, such as Nigel Fisher, found much of his case attractive. Others, such as Robin Turton, were about to spearhead a powerful Conservative minority attack against Britain's entry into the Common Market. The end of Commonwealth entry was seen, in his case, as part of a strategy to clear encumbrances in the way of becoming a more European oriented nation. Most of the Labour leadership were less certain than Gaitskell in their outright opposition. Even Patrick Gordon Walker, a Gaitskell ally and frontbench speaker against the legislation, was anxious that the opposition did not take up a totally

intractable position on the issue. In his diary he recorded: 'Saw Gaitskell. Explained to him difficulties in my constituency owing to colour and that I might lose my seat. He agreed that we should go all out and stop overcrowding.'[59]

As the government's popularity waned in the early 1960s, Labour's hopes for an electoral breakthrough rose sharply. The stance on immigration and control became more cautious and qualified, particularly with the arrival of a new leader, Harold Wilson. In drawing up a statement of policy for the 1964 election, there was a distinct change of emphasis. A shift from unremitting hostility to the legislation on control was evident: 'The Labour Party accepts the need of control over Commonwealth immigrants entering this country. The vital operation is not control itself, but how this control should be operated.'[60] Labour campaigners spoke of a fairer system and more Commonwealth consultation. They did not intend to reverse the legislation. Indeed, both parties were moving towards some kind of consensus. The Labour party policy statement had concluded: 'The Labour Party is convinced that control over the workers coming into this country should only be one part of a wide ranging policy to deal with the problem of immigration in this country.'[61] This was not so distant from the findings of the 1961 Interdepartmental Inquiry which had reported back to Macmillan's Cabinet committee in support of immigration control: 'In default of some action by this country to impose a legislative curb, there can be no escape from social problems which promise to become increasingly serious with the course of time.'[62] Both parties now believed that the main task was to concentrate more attention on those immigrants already in this country to relieve social tension.

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What can we conjecture about the government's decision to act in the final months of 1961? First, some of the constraints associated with the Commonwealth were weakening. West Indian, African and Asian leaders would make up their own minds on federation plans or association with western or socialist blocs. By the 1960s, the behaviour of the British government was seen by new nationalist leaders as less relevant. Domestic considerations, on the other hand, were looming larger. There were fears that splinter groups, active in areas such as the Midlands and pressing for immigration controls, would break out of the closed political world unless some action was taken. The black immigrants themselves arrived at a time when doubts were rising about the future direction of British society. They found themselves absorbed into the endless debates about stratification and class. This new black population was seen as a likely addition to the ever-present and

demanding underclass: 'the immigrants are not being assimilated and tend to be associated with the lowest class of the population'.[63]

Finally, ministers saw themselves contemplating the end of unrestricted Commonwealth entry at the moment that they were pushing for admission to the European Economic Community, with the possibility of the mobility of EEC populations across frontiers. Macleod had drawn attention to problems which might arise from this when he listed the practical difficulties faced by the Cabinet committee. He included 'the relation of the proposed control, if we joined the European Economic Community to allow[ing] freedom of movement into the United Kingdom from the Community countries'.[64] It was felt that legislation needed to be enacted before Britain entered the Community. Conservative governments had clung to indirect methods of limitation for as long as they thought it was to their advantage to do so. By 1961, ministers had come to the conclusion that the time was now appropriate for change. The controls throughout the so-called 'permissive 1960s' became ever tighter as domestic pressures grew.

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6 Eric Williams to H. Macmillan, PRO PREM 11/3238, 25 February 1961.
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12 PRO CO 1028/50, undated 1959.
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Commentary

UK

Anti-racist child protection*

A. Sivanandan, in his article 'Left, Right and Burnage',[1] argues that there is no such thing as anti-racist ideology. He explores how the growing body of liberal thought and ideas umbrellaed within the term 'anti-racism' has reconstituted the fight against racism into a plea for multiculturalism and 'positive action for ethnic minorities'. I shall, quite possibly, quite probably, explode the next time somebody refers to me as an 'ethnic minority'. Throughout my life as a Black woman, I have been defined and redefined by others – 'coloured', 'half-caste', mixed-race, mixed parentage and ... ethnic minority. It is as if my ethnicity (whatever that is) were the problem, as if the issue were to do with numbers or being in a minority, rather than to do with power and oppression. As if the lack of value and respect for cultural difference were the cause and not merely a symptom of racism. This is a distortion of the experience of Black people and a gross distortion of my concern for social equality.

In so distorting the issues, the political energy and fire are taken out of the fight against racism, even as racism flourishes. As Sivanandan reminds us, it was racism that killed Ahmed Ullah back in 1986 at Burnage High School and anti-racism did not prevent his death. If there is no such thing as anti-racist ideology, then there can be no experts in anti-racist ideology. This is an important point, since it concerns the income of the increasing number of 'experts', Black and, yes, white too, that have been spawned by the race relations industry

* Talk given by Adèle Jones to a seminar at Warwick University, 20 May 1992, and to be published in *Protecting Children from Abuse: multi-professionalism and the Children Act 1989*, edited by Tricia David (Stoke on Trent, Trentham Books, forthcoming).

and the market philosophy of this conservative era.

Meanwhile, racism, unabated by strategies on positive action, continues to cause the death of some children, like Ahmed, and harm to thousands of others.

It is not that Sivanandan considers anti-racism unimportant. His argument is that there is 'no body of thought called anti-racism, no orthodoxy, or dogma, no manual of strategy and tactics, no demonology'. If, however, by anti-racism we mean 'against' racism, then this has real value only if it is rooted in the fight against racism. This struggle is not lodged in a need for greater cultural understanding and tolerance, neither is it to be found in strategies for 'positive action for ethnic minorities'. It is part and parcel of the resistance to exploitation and an understanding of the nature of racism, its dehumanising and oppressive effects.

It is from this perspective that I approach the subject of anti-racist child protection, and readers who expect to find handy hints on working in a 'culturally-sensitive' way should read no further: they will be disappointed.

So what, then, is anti-racist child protection? Well, firstly, in placing Black centre-stage, and not as a back-drop for white, we can see clearly that the current social work construction of child protection is yet another process through which racism is manifest. At a very simple level, any definition of child protection which does not address the protection of Black children from the harmful effects of racism and racial attacks must be challenged. Ensuring that *all* children have the right to protection from *all* forms of abusive power is central to anti-racist child protection work. However, this does not define it. There is no 'it' to define. What there is, as bell hooks points out in *Black Looks*,[2] is our responsibility to evaluate critically and intervene in the system of which we have become a part. What there is, is a collection of thoughts and means, different and forever changing, used to combat the pervasive, but also constantly changing, racist abuse of power. What I share, then, are some of my thoughts about dealing with racism in child protection work, you must look for the means.

The themes that I wish to explore are:

- current social work practice and procedures, and
- perceptions of abuse.

Social work practice and procedures

Child protection is the term used to cover the range of duties, responsibilities and powers that social workers and other professionals have in order to protect children from abuse and to prevent them from being harmed. It has become an area of work bound, at one end, by legal mandate and, at the other, by procedures and regulations, so much so that a professional vacuum has been created. This makes it

virtually impossible for parents, families and even those who have been abused to assert that they have any expertise at all in the protection of children. The principle of 'partnership', one of the social work words for this decade, is, quite amazingly, applied to describe relationships with families who say they are willing to cooperate and accept decisions made. In a recent study I carried out for NSPCC in the North West, parents described feeling powerless and inadequate, their role in protecting their children being relegated to accepting the view the agency had of them and the decisions made.[3] Anger and resistance, and even disagreement, understandable though these responses might be, were pathologised and used to reinforce the position and views of the agency.

What is certain is that *all* children have the unequivocal right to protection from harm and abuse. What is less clear, however, is how an approach that leaves parents feeling so powerless can at the same time 'empower' them (another 90s' word) to fulfil their responsibilities to their children. While children are abused within their families, paradoxically it is also families, in the widest sense, that can provide the greatest protection from abuse.

If the 'professionalisation' of child protection has created a vacuum that prevents the full participation of parents and families, it has also provided a cover for institutionalising racism into the process.

The guidance issued by the Department of Health ('Protecting children'),[4] described to me by a worker as the 'bible' for assessment work, provides an example of how any approach which fails to deal with inequality will itself become a tool for perpetuating it. It suggests that there are a number of factors which are significant in assessing parental background. Included among these are such things as poverty, persistent truanting/under-achievement at school and poor employment record/frequent moves/unemployed. Set within the context of indicators for child abuse, these factors are seen as the failings of individuals rather than as the product of social inequality. The focus for intervention, concerned more with the failing individual than their social circumstances, masks the fact that poverty does indeed affect the ability of families to protect children. 'Under-achieving at school' and 'unemployed' are terms that are applied to Black people with a disproportionate frequency. This reflects different manifestations of racism. Any assessment process that sees these as the failings of Black people, as indicators of child abuse, rather than the effects of racial inequality, is in itself racist. One of the themes that all current social work legislation has in common is the emphasis on parental and family responsibility. This, ironically, runs hand in hand with a decrease in the resources that help families to fulfil their responsibilities. Decent housing and well-paid jobs contribute to the care and protection of children. While I am firmly opposed to the approach that suggests that

the absence of these leads inevitably to higher risk for children, it is clear that families in this situation are faced with a double-edged sword. On the one hand, these factors may be used to assess risk to children and, on the other, little will be done to reduce these factors should they affect the family's ability to provide care for the child. In the death of Tyra Henry, poverty and poor housing were key factors in Beatrice Henry's inability to protect her. 'There is an ever-present danger in social work ... of believing that the poor are so accustomed to poverty that they can be expected to get by in conditions which no middle-class family would be expected to tolerate.'[5]

'Protecting children', the Department of Health's guide on assessment, is incorrectly titled. Guides and procedures such as this, whatever the intentions and however useful parts of them might be, lead us further and further into an approach that is more about protecting social work systems than it is about protecting children.

I have great concerns about the extent and effects of violence and oppression of children, not just nationally but globally. However, I fail to see how procedures, which often become ends in themselves, provide the resources to prevent child abuse. Although community care is considered as the poor relation of child protection social work, you can see parallels which perhaps make the point more clearly. Under the community care changes, my mother who is disabled is entitled to an *assessment*. She can even find out what the *assessment criteria* are and, if she disagrees with the assessment, she can use the *complaints procedure*. She may even have a *care package* put together for her and be appointed a *care manager*. All of these terms describe procedures and systems which require complex monitoring and regulation. My mother has no interest in them whatsoever; her concern is with the fact that, because of the cuts in services, she has to forgo her daily bath.

The consequences of child protection work that focuses more on procedures than services are, of course, more serious. Children at risk of abuse in families are also exposed to it through social work. Many social workers have come to believe that the term 'child protection' justifies their intervention, whatever form that intervention takes. It does not. There are many people who have found the effects of social work intervention to be as great as, and sometimes greater than, the effects of abuse.

> I asked you to put an end to the abuse – you put an end to my whole family, you took away my nights of hell and gave me days of hell instead; you've exchanged my private nightmare for a very public one.[6]

This is an indictment of social work and there is now a considerable body of evidence to show that not only is state intervention and care no guarantee of protection of children, it can also be harmful.

With regard to Black children, there is no research to suggest that the prevalence of sexual and physical abuse is any different from that of white children. However, given that Black people are subjected to greater levels of poverty, unemployment and poor housing and given the use of these factors as indicators in assessment of potential child abuse, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Black people are facing a greater level of risk from the harmful effects of social work mis-intervention and misjudgment.

The social work of these times, particularly in relation to child protection, has become burdensome. In its attempts to become more effective, it has often, in reality, become yet another millstone around the necks of children.

Any critic of the system is seen to condone liberal non-intervention and leaving children at risk. Challenges to racism lead some white workers, in their eagerness to throw off any such charges, to abdicate responsibility altogether and to back off completely. Their passive 'right-on' poses are sometimes more dangerous than mis-intervention. Social work posturing and re-posturing on the topic leaves people confused, and yet the myth that social workers are the experts is somehow maintained despite this. Even when the inadequacies and abuses of the system are exposed, through examples such as the gross abuse over many years of children in residential care by Beck in Leicestershire and the experiences of families in Cleveland, the impact is marginal. They are significant in the 'scandal' they cause, to use a media term, rather than in the influence they have in challenging the current social work system.

The 1989 Children Act, noble though its principles might be, is collusive in the support of a system that requires fundamental change. Social work has taken on a deceit that is in keeping with an era of 'conservative cons' so that words like 'choice' and 'citizens' rights' disguise policies which result in an infringement of basic human rights and, through poverty and discrimination, the restriction of people's choice. Social work clients are now 'empowered', they are ensured 'participation' and social workers will work in 'partnership' with them. These terms mask the fact that it is the disempowering effects of social work that need to be challenged and that allowing people to be partners in the care of their children is an indication of inequality rather than an attempt to redress it. The commitment to empowerment is both fragile and transparent – we have done nothing more than intellectualise the term and build it in to our professional jargon.

The concerns about system abuse relate to all children, but, given the impact of racism, Black children are disproportionately affected. As Bandana Ahmed points out, 'nowhere is abuse and oppression more exposed than through the Black experience'. Social work can only become an effective protector of children when it is prepared to

tackle social inequality and injustice. While we need to develop more progressive ways of working with children and families, it is within this context that such development should take place.

One particular example of progressive work that is worth exploring is the *whanau* decision-making process that is used in New Zealand to protect and care for children. It is progressive not because it is new; in fact, it is based on Maori traditions that span centuries. It is progressive because it is set within the context of addressing social inequality and the racist outcomes of social work practice with indigenous Maori peoples.

The process is based on the belief that each family (that is, family in its widest sense) is the 'expert' on itself. It best knows its strengths, its problems and is best placed to determine what resources it needs in order to care for and support its members. It is in the family that decisions concerning the family should be made, it is here that the most appropriate decisions are made and that, when families make their own decisions, there is a commitment to make them work. In the field of child protection, workers have come to realise that while most abuse is caused by family members on their own children, the family can also provide better protection for children than the state. Families have the power and responsibility to make decisions about protecting children who have been harmed or are at risk and the professionals are invited to participate to provide information, support and resources.

The practice has developed out of the coming together of different struggles against racism and responds to the challenge issued by Te Kakapaiwaho Tibble: 'Returning the authority of the tribe to the tribes, of the sub-tribes to the sub-tribes, of the families to the families, of the individuals to the individuals, who represent as the multiple self the generations of the past and the present.'[7]

It is important to note that the power for decision-making is in the hands of the wider family and not just the nuclear family. The task of the social work agencies is to bring the family together, irrespective of geographical and emotional boundaries, in the interests of the child. Where parents object to the inclusion of the wider family, they may still be brought together based on the principle that the child has a right as an individual to the support and protection of wider family members, particularly where risk to them might mean that they cannot continue living with their parents. The process is described fully in the publication *Family Decision Making*.[8] These comments of workers, extracted from the publication, challenge many of the assumptions that currently hamper child protection work in this country:

We have come to understand that:

- The people who get most deeply impassioned about a particular case of child abuse are the blood relatives.

- The people who have the most investment in protecting the child are the blood relatives.
- The people who understand the family dynamics best are blood relatives.
- Families hold information that workers can never access.

The myth of a child's safety in state care was exploded by the Department of Social Welfare Research which highlighted the level of sexual abuse of children while in the care of the state.

- Our acknowledgement of this stopped us demanding of families absolute guarantees of children's safety.
- Our acknowledgement of this helped us relinquish our investment in the old system.

The successful early outcomes of family decision-making reinforced our commitment to this way of working.

- The families came up with a variety of alternatives greater than anything we could imagine or offer.
- The families took the responsibility for the children from us and if a decision did not work, the family took the responsibility of making another decision.
- The families are the best source of information on which decisions can be made. We realised how inadequate our own assessments had been.

Perceptions of abuse

Most attempts to define abuse fail to acknowledge the impact that racial abuse has on Black children. This omission, at the very least, denies the reality of the Black experience in Britain and also gives sanction to racism. Like other forms of abuse, racial abuse occurs in many ways, including racial harassment, attacks and even death. A 1985 Home Office study revealed that there were 70,000 racial attacks each year. While these are not always targeted at children, being young is no protection and often whole families are attacked with no regard for the age or vulnerability of the family members.

'Fingerprints'
by Lemn Sissay

I can see your fingerprints
fumbled all over this dead boy's body,
can see them in his
lifeless eyes,
in his fist clutched
by rigor mortis,
and holding up your hands to calm us people
you say: 'This was not a racial attack.'

I can see the wipe marks
on his forehead
where with the side of your fist
you tried to wipe them in
reshape them
rub them in
distort them
change them
hide them
rearrange them
with ink that dried
before he died
You report
'We understand the victim was Black.
This was not a racial attack.'[9]

Violence perpetrated by those with racialist views is generally regarded as nothing to do with social work. Viewed as the extreme behaviour of a far-right minority, racial violence is not considered a significant enough issue even to merit a mention in child protection work. However, 70,000 attacks is hardly an insignificant number and none of the murderers of the eight Black people who lost their lives in racist murders in 1992 was a member of a far-right organisation. Far from being a 'minority' problem, racial violence is a feature of a society which creates the social conditions in which Black people are discriminated against.

Moreover, by its failure to address racial violence, social work is sanctioning it. If, as a social worker, your understanding of a child's physical and sexual abuse incorporates a feminist perspective which explores the ways in which violence and abuse of power are part of the process of socialisation, then you should understand that racial violence is a feature of, and not separate from, the racism of society. Furthermore, if you subscribe to the view that pornography contributes to the development of an environment in which sexual abuse is deconstructed and rendered acceptable, then you should understand that racism is rendered acceptable by the state, its institutions, its legislation, the media, etc.

A good example of media distortion can be found in the coverage of the placement of Black children in white foster homes. Violence between Black people in South Africa is termed 'Black on Black' violence, yet the war in Bosnia is not 'white on white'. Similarly, the placement of Black children gets a very different treatment by the media from the placement of white children. 'Same-race placement policies', 'political dogma of the extreme left' and even 'apartheid' are all terms used to describe a practice for which there is sound rationale. White children have always been cared for by white families without

media histrionics or 'extremist' labelling. The rationale for placing Black children in Black families lies within the struggle against racism and in the experiences of groups such as the Black and In Care National Steering Group. It is a feature of racism itself that such a rationale is necessary – there have been no equivalent debates about the placement of white children and it is ironic that when Black adults have sought to protect and support Black children, they themselves have been labelled as racist!

The CCETSW manual, 'Improving practice with children and families', devotes a chapter to this topic and, in an exercise exploring media constructions, it asks the questions:

1 Why has the mainstream (white) media suddenly developed a concern for the fate of Black children? How does this concern with Black children who are in, or could be in, white families contrast with their lack of general concern about Black children? Coverage of the Deptford fire, in which 13 Black children perished, offers a salutary contrast here.

2 Why is all of the emphasis on the 'banning' of white parents as substitute carers for Black children? What about the decades of policies and practices which have effectively 'banned' Black people as substitute carers?

3 Why is Black and anti-racist opposition labelled as 'politically motivated'? Why is a picture presented of the struggles of individuals against the might of the 'loony left', anti-racist bureaucracies? How is it that the notion of 'racism' is turned precisely on its head, the realities of racism faced by Black people are denied and when Black people dare to object to the placement of Black children in white families, they are deemed 'racist'?

4 Who does the white media turn to for testimony? Who are the experts? Whose stories are heard? Why is the hurt suffered by white people seen as the most important?[10]

The placement of Black children in Black families is about the protection of those children. It *is* a child protection issue. Undue focus on the issue tends to distract from other issues, such as the high numbers of Black children in local authority care and their vulnerability to poverty and poor housing. These factors are part of the wider context of racism which affect the life chances of Black children in fundamental ways. It will affect where they live, their income, where or if they work, their education, their health, their safety and their relationship with others. Contrary to popular media interpretation, Black children are not helped to deal with the effects of this type of abuse by being rescued by white people. Not only will they still be

exposed to racism; they will also be less equipped to challenge and deal with it. There are Black people who have grown up in care who claim not to have experienced racism, as if the greater identification and familiarity with white folks reduces the likelihood! Unfortunately, the manifestations of racism are not within the control of individuals or groups who are its victims and racism is not destroyed by a failure to acknowledge it. If anything is reduced, it is the ability to challenge it.

A further problem for Black children growing up apart from Black adults is the reconstruction by white and Black people of identity. We have moved out of the period in which difference was played down and integration into a norm that valued only white, English orthodoxy was the benchmark of having cared well for Black children. Now, in the concern not to be seen to devalue Black children (while continuing to devalue their Black parents), cultural heritage is defined and objectified into static ethnic packaging. Parts of being Black are turned into commodities, while other parts are rejected. Black identity is reconstructed and sold back to us. We are told that, to be Black, you have to fit into the slot you have been allotted. For Black children growing up in care without the diversity, the richness, the collective wisdoms and foolishnesses, without the strengths and strategies of Black peoples, there is a danger that they fit the slot and lose themselves or deny themselves altogether.

A young person from the Manchester Black and In Care Group describes the way in which she was affected by this process: 'The image of myself was reflected back as an image associated with drugs, violence, simpleness, exotic, problematic, bad and mad. From the time I first saw or heard, all the positive images I was provided with were white people and I did not exist as myself, or only in someone else's design.'

Black people have long since understood that minimising the effects of this form of abuse means providing children with care that builds self-esteem, strengths and strategies for dealing with racism. It is this knowledge that lies behind the struggle of the last decade for the right of Black children not to be removed from their families in the first case and, when this is inevitable, for them to be cared for by Black adults.

As with other forms of abuse, it is the survivors who highlight best the struggles and strategies that helped them to deal with the personal effects of abuse.

'Gifts from my grandmother'
by Meiling Jin
A long overdue poem to my eyes
Poor brown slit eyes
You cause me so much pain
But for you, I would be
Totally invisible.

When young
You filled with tears
At the slightest provocation
When children teased
It was because of you
They hated me.

In story books,
Her big blue eyes opened wide
But you, you narrowed into slits.

Hard brown slit eyes
Echoes of the pain
You mirror back the world,
And I can see them all,
Drowning there.

Soft brown slit eyes
Windows of the soul
I can see you staring back
Frank, open, lovely.

Anti-racist child protection is concerned not only with challenging the racism in child protection procedures and within society generally, it is also concerned with the violence that Black children experience within their families. This is not different from the violence that white children experience within their families and neither is it separate from the violence children are subjected to globally.

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Russia

After the Cold War: the ex-Soviet media and Africa

Africa has long been a fruitful source for the western mass media of 'bad news', adverse coverage which capitalises on the continent's real and imagined weaknesses. During the colonial period, the Rider Haggard type of adventure tale, coupled with yellow journalism and pseudo-scientific reportage, painted the image of a dark continent inhabited by rude savages and godless heathens.[1] The contemporary western news media have not shifted far away from that colonial tradition, showing Africa as a place where nothing, except drought, disease, pestilence and a host of other tragedies, occurs. Africa is now, as it was then, projected as a tabula rasa which is bereft of contribution to the human race.

What is less known is how the ex-Soviet media, established on the principles of 'proletarian internationalism' and 'solidarity with peoples fighting for their spiritual, political and economic liberation',[2] covered Africa.

After independence in the 1960s, many African leaders came to see the Soviet system as more humane and an alternative to western capitalism. They hoped to receive a more realistic and balanced coverage of their continent. What did not occur to them was that media coverage in the first socialist country was subjected to the logic of Cold War politics.

Up to the end of the Cold War, North-South relations were, largely, an extension of the East-West conflict. Under the banner of 'struggling against American-led western capitalism and imperialist expansionism', the Soviet Union pursued its own ambitions in Africa and other parts of the developing world.[3] The United States of America, for its part, tended to interpret anti-communism as synonymous with freedom.

The fixation with the East-West confrontation distracted attention from numerous problems and issues in the so-called Third World. Both the Soviet and the western press loyally amplified and sustained their ideological and psychological warfare, on behalf of the two power blocs, to such a deafening extent as to shut off the distant voices of desperation and anguish in the developing world. In fact, the Cold War could be said to have been fought out more in the press of the opposing systems than anywhere else.

The end of the Cold War ushered in a sense of optimism in the developing world. It raised the prospect that Third World issues would

cease to be viewed through the prism of the East-West confrontation and from within the narrow framework of superpower stereotypes. It would be easier now to identify many problems in the developing world which the East-West conflict had pushed out of world focus. But this optimism turned out to be premature. The African proverb – that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers, and when they make love, it is the same grass that suffers – acquired a new ring of truth during the post-Cold War era. Nowhere has this logic been more obviously demonstrated than in the workings of the ex-Soviet media.

Before and after glasnost

When the doors of Victor Verster prison creaked open for Nelson Mandela to walk to freedom in February 1990, the media in the western and developing world virtually exploded with the news. Television and radio gave the story top billing and the print media ran full-page spreads on the man who had not been seen outside prison walls for nearly three decades. This was not the case in what was then President Gorbachev's Soviet Union. Central Television allotted less than 30 seconds at the tail end of its main evening news programme, *Vremya*.[4] The sports report was considered more newsworthy.

The following day, *Pravda* (the main mouthpiece of the now disbanded Communist party) buried the story (a short, unremarkable biographical sketch of Mandela) under a commentary on Soviet-US relations on page five. *Izvestia* (the paper of the ex-Soviet parliament) carried nothing on Mandela's release. Instead, it published a report by its Southern African correspondent on threats by white South African nationalists to kill Mandela if he was freed.

This poor coverage was not a slip of journalistic memory; neither was it an isolated case. It is the trend in glasnost-style and post-Cold War journalism in the former Soviet Union (now the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)). A survey I conducted in 1991 showed that, during the past seven years or so, the marginalisation of Africa has reached grotesque proportions. Perestroika and glasnost in international news coverage went only as far as Europe, North America and some parts of Asia. To Russian journalists, Africa still lies in the darkness of the pre-glasnost (*zastoi*) stagnation years of the 1970s. That, perhaps, explains why hardly any report about Africa is complete without the favourite qualification *'cherny' kontinent* (the dark continent).[5] The survey further revealed that, contrary to popular belief, the ex-Soviet press, originally built on the principles of marxist-leninist proletarian internationalism and 'natural solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the developing world',[6] fell far behind a number of western publications in depth, frequency and 'objectivity', even given the latter's extremely miserly and sensationalised coverage of Africa.

The same overall trend was already evident from an investigation of

the 1987 coverage by three major Soviet news publications. Between November and December 1987, *Pravda* (Truth), *Izvestia* (News) and, between January and March, *Novoe Vremya* (New Times) published 107 journalistic pieces about twenty-three African countries, as against 213 items about twenty-two countries by the *Daily Telegraph, New York Times* and *Newsweek* (January-March 1987).

More than half (54.2 per cent) were devoted to issues concerning the seamy side of African reality – that is, apartheid, civil wars, border clashes, famine, diseases, etc. Only 25.2 per cent covered positive occurrences in Africa – that is, stories that did not fall within the 'coup and famine syndrome', but were on topics such as the economy, agriculture, African cooperation and unity. Nearly half (45.8 per cent) were newsbriefs of 30-90 words, mostly culled from the main western wire services (Associated Press, Reuters, Agence France Presse and United Press International). Apart from presenting an incomplete and superficial picture of Africa, these publications ostensibly sought, by using western sources, to absolve themselves from blame for the predominantly negative information purveyed. 'After all we are not saying so. They say so.' A graphic example of this blame-shifting approach was *Pravda*'s coverage of the debate over the origin of AIDS. After its initial claim – that the disease was manufactured artificially in a US military laboratory in Fort Derricks – was vehemently contested by the US government, which threatened to suspend bilateral talks with the USSR, *Pravda* reverted to the 'African (green monkey) origin of AIDS' version propagated in some western publications. Thus, under the heading 'It Originated ... It's Not a Mutant',[7] *Pravda* culled an article from *Newsweek* which claimed that AIDS originated in Africa. But unlike *Newsweek* – which at least published a rejoinder from a Kenyan journalist to contest the 'green monkey' theory – *Pravda* carried only a 30-word summary of the *Newsweek* story. By publishing the article with no commentary or follow-up, *Pravda* sought to tell its readers that the disease originated from Africa, but that it was *Newsweek* that said so.[8]

Over 20 per cent of the articles were banal, official information or 'diplomatic news', mostly about the arrivals and departures of Soviet delegations from an African country or African delegates arriving in the Soviet Union.[9] This type of news, apparently meant to demonstrate to Soviet readers the generosity and friendliness of the Kremlin's Africa policy, was more often accompanied by pictures than other types. The media remained silent on a number of issues reported in the West, including a demonstration of African students in China against racial discrimination.

The reason for ignoring this is understandable. African students in the former Soviet Union also face extreme racial abuse. Beatings, and even racial murders, are never reported by the media. For example, the

brutal killing of a Ghanaian student in Moscow, in early 1992, was only reported in the *Moscow Times*, an English-language weekly put together by western reporters. It was completely ignored by the Russian media. This ties in with the tradition of Communist training and practice in journalism. Soviet journalists were instructed to write that 'socialism and racism are incompatible', and that 'racism has dissolved in the new socialist consciousness';[10] it is only in the 'unjust', 'wild' West where blacks are lynched.[11]

In the western media, news stories originating from Africa tend to be rated equal to those from other parts of the world and, if sensational or monumental enough, are put on the front pages. For example, the release of African National Congress activist Govan Mbeki from an apartheid jail captured the front pages of the London *Daily Telegraph* and the *New York Times*.

The Soviet press, however, treated news coming from Africa as second rate: it hardly ever attracted front-page treatment, not to mention editorial comment. For the period under review, only a telegram sent on board a plane by former Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam to Gorbachev appeared on the front page of *Izvestia*.[12]

Analytical articles remained largely moralising and paternalistic. Journalists who tended to sympathise with Africa consistently leaned towards writing sob stories about famine, AIDS in Africa, 'the debt trap', crocodiles in the Nile river and Egyptian mummies. Some wrote with racist undertones. For example, the one-time prominent *Izvestia* columnist, Alexander Bovin (now Russia's ambassador to Israel), wrote with 'concern' that the continent could have a population explosion if efforts were made to check the effects of the AIDS disease.

Self-critical articles from the glasnost era have thrown more light on the sloppy and stereotyped character of Soviet journalism on Africa. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, the Union of Soviet Writers' weekly broadsheet, published one article claiming that, for most Soviet writers and journalists, writing about Africa is as 'easy and simple now as it was twenty-five years ago ... Mix a little bit of exoticism with the struggle against imperialism; add a few fine words by any African in praise of socialist countries and presto! an article is ready.' For those who have never visited Africa, there was a different recipe: 'Describe the stormy continent from your Moscow office. Cut to the required size an article from a western newspaper. Dilute the texture of a more successful article written by your compatriot. Add a quote from a mythical dark-skinned friend and an article is born.' To the overwhelming majority of Soviet journalists and writers, the article continues, Africa today is still the Africa of the pre-independence era: 'The same myth-ridden, exotic Africa with its awesome jungles populated by prowling, man-eating lions and crocodiles.'[13]

Later surveys of the Soviet press show that the marginalisation of

Africa increased with the pace of glasnost. Moreover, the main clichés employed by Soviet journalists to describe African issues in the world context underwent drastic changes. In 1985, Africa's problems were attributed to factors such as 'birthmarks of capitalism', 'imperialist intrigues' and 'exploitation', 'hostile bourgeois propaganda', 'US expansionist policies', 'a plot against Africa' and many more. By 1990, these stereotypes had disappeared from the lexicon of Soviet journalists, as had terms like 'solidarity', 'disinterested aid', 'proletarian internationalism', 'socialist solidarity' and 'socialist fraternity',[14] still employed in 1987 to describe Soviet-African relations. In their place, new terms such as 'universal human values', 'global co-operation', 'deideologisation of inter-state relations' have come to be used. At the same time, Africa began to be increasingly described as *'cherny kontinent'*.

Sometimes, journalists appear to have difficulty in deciding how to describe Africans. Thus, the African is variously referred to as *'negro'*, *'cherny'*, the former term being most often used, despite its offensiveness.[15] Yet another remarkable change was the gradual toning down of paternalism in Soviet writing on Africa. The 'Soviet socialist experience' is no longer recommended as a recipe for good governance in Africa and the old image of Africans has had to be recast to suit the new, 'non-ideological' vision.

Now, coverage of Africa merely catalogues the familiar banes and woes of the continent – the world's highest infant mortality and adult morbidity rates, the lowest life expectancy, the threats of population explosion, AIDS, famine, ad infinitum.

While in the past such reports would have been spiced with accusations of 'western complicity' or 'international finance capital pillage',[16] recent reports do not look for external culprits. Most now put the blame on Africans themselves. For instance, *Pravda*, in 'We are Africans in a European Home',[17] writes that Africans have wasted 'solid' amounts of western credits through bad management and corruption, and that tiny Belgium produces more goods than the whole of Africa. Characteristically, other objective factors, like the lopsided international economic order or the fact that the Belgian farmer receives many times more than the African farmer for the same amount of work, are glossed over.

Tarzan images: the Soviet version

The economic crisis and political uproar in the disintegrated Soviet Union may partly explain the glasnost media's marginalisation of Africa. In fact, the standard reply when this question is raised is that domestic problems have taken media focus from the continent.

But my study of the press shows that coverage of foreign news did not decrease during the six Gorbachevian perestroika years. On the

contrary, more countries and regions formerly left out of the orbit of Soviet press coverage came to be covered regularly. Coverage of the countries of South-East Asia, the so-called tigers, for example, more than trebled. So what does lie behind the increasing marginalisation of Africa?

Historically, the Soviet media have painted a rather simplistic, idealistic and exotic picture of Africa. A well-known poster, popular before perestroika, summarises it all: it depicts a muscular African man inside a map of Africa breaking a hefty chain that has been wrought around his hands and feet. The inscription reads: *'Svoboda Afrike'* ('Freedom to Africa'). Apparently, this was meant to solicit sympathy from the ordinary Soviet citizenry for the African freedom cause. But the mercy-soliciting and paternalistic propaganda was carried out hand-in-hand with hate-mongering. For instance, while schoolchildren were taught (not without a racist tinge)[18] to have compassion for Africans, children's poems and cartoons painted the Soviet version of Tarzan images of Africa for them. One such poem, since made into an animated television cartoon, depicts Africa as a continent infested with prowling man-eating beasts. A line in the poem warns, 'Children never on earth go to Africa, for in Africa there are crocodiles, gorillas, sharks ... they'll bite you.'* The cartoon is so popular, even among adults, that it is frequently used in films and cited in other media.[19]

The media during the immediate pre-independence era claimed that Africans would be better off breaking the chains of colonial subjugation and western dependence. But they would be better off still if they chose the Soviet road to socialism.[20] The imaginary and desired were taken for the reality, and media propaganda told Russians that, with Soviet assistance, Africans were breaking the fetters of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation.

However, it was not the destinies of the 'exploited' and 'subjugated' in Africa, but the scoring of ideological points in the Cold War that was the primary concern of the Kremlin's propaganda planners. Decades of paternalistic Communist propaganda had portrayed the USSR as big-hearted Big Brother, lavishing free and *besvosmezdnaya pomosh*[21] (disinterested assistance) on 'poor and defenceless peoples of the developing world struggling against capitalist subjugation and neo-colonialist blackmail'.[22] Not surprisingly, such propaganda has boomeranged, its net effect today being to locate Africans as part of the problem in Russia and other member states of the CIS. It is easy to understand why, as Russia now finds itself in economic turmoil, Africa

* The truncated and stereotyped presentation of Africa reinforced widespread prejudice. African students have complained that Soviets often asked them questions like 'Do you have houses in Africa?', 'Do you have cars?', 'You must be brave to cohabit with snakes and lions?' Some, they claimed, thought they arrived in Russia in loin cloths, only to be provided with clothing at Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport.

has become the convenient whipping horse, the scapegoat. Little wonder that the small number of African students in the CIS have, in the wake of the demise of Communism, been subjected to hysterical hate campaigns, daily beatings and even killings by the motley fascist groupings.[23]

But the new form of marginalisation has also something to do with a recent eurocentrism engendered by the new thinking. When Gorbachev commenced his reforms, his team set out to fashion a brand new foreign policy, which became increasingly western-oriented and pragmatic. The new planners of Soviet policy in Africa announced that they were shedding 'ideological ballast'.[24] Soviet African relations, like relations with other parts of the developing world, were now to be based on Lenin's injunction: 'More economics, less political/*ideological* trivialities' (emphasis added).

During the six-year Gorbachevian rule, this injunction was followed to the letter as the Kremlin gradually cut aid and support for its allies, the countries of so-called socialist orientation. The argument was that the Soviet Union got itself bogged down in useless ventures in Africa, always gave out and received nothing in return for its ideological investments. The natural tendency to scrutinise past commitments, however, due to the parlous economic situation in the country, turned into witch-hunting and anti-African bashing among the new leaders. Both politicians and the media made capital on the so-called free internationalist assistance to African and other Third World countries.

The democrats and fascists in tune

But the issue was raised to a crescendo after the botched August 1991 coup when the 'democrats', led by Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, took the reins of power.[25] Events in the wake of the demise of Communism have proved that, if the Communists and their media were patronising but friendly, even solicitous, in their approach to Africa, the 'democrats' and the new press appear largely uninterested, condescending and even racist. If the Communists prided themselves on offering '*bratskaya i shedraya pomosh*' (fraternal and generous aid) to Africa and never got tired of drumming home to the citizenry how the 'big-hearted communist Big Brother' was performing its marxist internationalist duty by assisting poor African countries in their 'just struggle against western blackmail and exploitation',[26] the democrats have chosen a much less pompous but far more infamous role.

They did not lose time after taking over before giving full rein to their suppressed racist sentiments. They have used the mass media to air not only their loss of interest in Africa, but also their anger at and disdain for Africans. Before and after the failed August coup, Boris Yeltsin was on record as having said that socialism should have been experimented with in a small African country and not in the huge

Soviet Union[27] – which makes Africans nothing but guinea pigs to be experimented on.

For Russia's new political bureaucracy and the media, citing Africa as a metaphor for poverty, backwardness and hopelessness has become a fad; chastising the former Communist leadership for 'wasting' Soviet resources in Africa, a vote-catcher and applause-drawer at political gatherings and in parliament. Hence, one of the early hot-selling slogans coined by the 'democrats' and widely disseminated by the press during the heady days of their onslaught against Communist rule read, roughly, 'We're chasing and shall catch up with Africa'.

The leader of the Democratic Party of Russia, Nikolai Travkin, a former building engineer, launched his political career with a stinging criticism of the Communists for having 'wasted precious resources on people who have just begun to call themselves a people, have only descended from palm trees and have only managed to pronounce the word "socialism"'.[28] The Russian Federation presidential aspirant and founder of the Liberal Party of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, returned from a visit to the US to tell Russians that he was appalled by the huge presence of African-Americans, Asian-Americans, etc., in New York. According to him, America's current problems were rooted in its large, concentrated non-white population and he volunteered his services to the then President George Bush to cleanse the country.

Fascists, too, have been given access to the mainstream media in what seems to be a calculated attempt by the new leaders to use the media to marginalise Africa. In April 1992, a programme on the state-owned Central Television saw fascists openly expressing their resentment against Africans and blacks in general.[29] This is hardly surprising, considering the fact that Russia's new 'democrats' differ very little in their attitude towards blacks from the motley national-chauvinistic and fascist groupings now mushrooming all over Russia.

But there is one African country that is reported liberally and portrayed in glowing terms, as a land of eternal spring, an African El Dorado – South Africa.[30] The press traces Russia's historical links with the racist regime back to the Anglo-Boer war when Russian soldiers were said to have fought on the side of the Boers against the English.

The ANC has been referred to as the 'richest' liberation movement in the world,[31] and calls to cut aid to it have been made in the mainstream media, including *Pravda* and *Izvestia*.[32] The injustices of the apartheid system, the pet topic for Soviet journalists during the Cold War era, are hardly mentioned in more recent reports. What exercised *Izvestia*, for example, when it devoted its entire foreign news page to South Africa (17 February 1992) were the economic ties between the two regions. In the CIS today, dollars make the news.

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1 See *Africa Events* (Vol.4, no.2, 1988), p.54.
2 See N. Yermoshkin, *Spiritual Colonialism* (Prague, 1984).
3 See Frank Furedi, 'Superpower rivalries in the Third World: new perspectives in the North-South dialogue', in Kofi B. Hadjor (ed.), *Essays in Honour of Olof Palme* (London, 1988).
4 The main news programme was discontinued almost immediately after the August 1991 putsch.
5 In Russian, the word '*cherny*' means black. In the context used here, it also means dark.
6 *Asia and Africa Today* (20 April 1984), p.1.
7 *Pravda* (29 December 1987), p.5.
8 A few months after the publication in *Pravda* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, African students in the ex-USSR started to be called *zelenya obeziana* (green monkey). Catchphrases using the Russian acronym for AIDS – SPID – were coined to taunt Africans. Two of them will be enough to show the extent of the prejudice. *SPID* is interpreted as: *Sotsialnoe Posledstvie Internatsionalnoi Druzhbi* (loosely translated, 'the social consequence of international friendship'). The second, *Spetisalniy Podarok Inostrannikh Druziei*, means a gift from foreign friends. See Charles Quist Adade, 'Africans: target of AIDS phobia', *African Concord* (3 December 1987), p.14, for a more detailed account.
9 During the period under review, Communist party delegations, mostly led by district and even village party secretaries and lower-ranking officials, visited six African countries, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Madagascar, Rwanda and Sudan. It is necessary to mention here that, while the African media gave front-page prominence to visits of such delegations, African delegations are never treated in the same vein by the ex-Soviet media. A story about the visit is given any prominence only when the delegation is led by the head of state.
10 See *Osnovi Marksistsko-Leninskoi Filosofii* (Moscow, 1985).
11 Before perestroika, Soviet television was saturated with the images of poor and homeless blacks queuing for charity food in Washington or London.
12 *Izvestia* (16 November 1987).
13 Boris Asoyan, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (7 October 1987), p.14.
14 Yuri Popov, 'New political thinking and the Third World', in *Asia and Africa Today* (No.4, 1990), p.36.
15 The Russian pronunciation of 'negro' is *niegr*, something that sounds between 'negro' and 'niger'.
16 See A.A. Gromyko, '*Aktualnie problemi otnoshenii SSR s stranami Afriki*' (Moscow, 1985).
17 *Pravda* (12 October 1991), p.5.
18 A school textbook published in 1968 narrates the story of how a Soviet schoolgirl (a young pioneer) saved a black slave by buying him off for merely five roubles at a slave auction in the US. The story, one in a series of anecdotes depicting the inhuman and unjust capitalist system in America, tended to tell Soviet children to have sympathy for blacks. But the latent paternalism and racism is clear. The Soviet young pioneer was being assigned the role of a liberator of the helpless black man from the hands of 'capitalist sharks'.
19 The cartoon was used in one of the first films of the perestroika and glasnost period, *Malenkaya Vera*. The poem has been quoted in several newspapers, including the St Petersburg weekly *Chas Pik* and *Nevskoe Vremya*, during the last few years.
20 Boris Asoyan, 'Afrika uzh tak daleko...', *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (7 November 1987), p.14.
21 Thanks to glasnost, Soviet publications – including *Moscow News* (No.49, 1989), p.6; *Izvestia* (6 February 1990), p.5; *Svobodnaya Mysl* (No.18, 1991), pp85-93 – have

disclosed that much of the 'disinterested' aid was military assistance. Recent research (see *New African*, July 1992, p.35) revealed that over 89 per cent of the 13.9 billion roubles debt owed by various African countries to the former Soviet Union was in the form of arms deliveries 'to defend socialist gains'.

22 Leon Zevin, V. Telerman, 'The developing countries in our economic strategies' in *Svobodnaya Mysl* (No.18, 1991).

23 Boris Asoyan, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (7 August 1989), p.3.

24 Yuri Popov, 'New political thinking and the Third World', in *Asia and Africa Today* (No.4, 1990), p.36.

25 About 80 per cent of the total number of ex-Soviet missions earmarked for closure by the Russian government as part of cost-saving exercises are in Africa.

26 A.A. Gromyko, *'Aktualnie problemi otnoshenii SSR s stranami Afriki'* (Moscow, 1985).

27 Yeltsin made the statement for the first time during a presidential election campaign in the Urals in June 1991. His speech was reported unedited by the *Mayak* radio station. The print media and television edited out 'Africa'. He repeated the same statement during an interview soon after the August Communist revanchist coup was foiled.

28 See *Literator* (St Petersburg, December 1990).

29 Several participants in the popular Russian TV programme, *Tema* (Theme), did not shy away from their racist sentiments. One said, in reply to a question, that he would emigrate to South Africa if the future president of Russia were black. According to him, it is easier to fight blacks in South Africa. Russians, he claims, are too soft. Taking a cue from the mainstream media are the fledgling fascist alternative media. The St Petersburg *Otechestvo* wrote in its February edition: 'American blacks, who earn five dollars per hour wages, could come to our country and pose as millionaires and take liberties with our girls and thereby contaminate the Russian blood.'

30 Yuri Sigov, 'Budet li nashi v YuAR zhit?', *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (10 October 1991), p.4.

31 *Pravda* (17 February 1992), p.5.

32 *Izvestia* (9 December 1991).

Book reviews

What link does Jane Austen have with the war in Vietnam?

Culture and Imperialism

By EDWARD SAID (New York, Knopf, and London, Chatto and Windus, 1993). 380pp., $25/£20.

April 1993 headlines featured a 'discovery' by a Harvard-based researcher in a Moscow archive indicating that, in the mid-1970s, the Vietnamese government claimed some 600 POWs when it actually held about 1,200. If true, said spokespeople from the White House, Congress, outraged heads of veterans' groups and the punditburo, the US government should freeze the process of re-establishing relations with Hanoi. The document 'proved' the rotten character – liars! – of the Vietnamese communists.

When US military 'authorities' subsequently cast doubt on the document's authenticity, the 'hot' item disappeared from the 'news'. The incident offers one obvious illustration of the modern narrative's perspective, in which western culture is inherently superior.

Lost in the incident and much other reporting on the Vietnam war is the fact that US planes bombed Vietnamese cities, killing as many as a million civilians. In media portrayals, however, US pilots and bombardiers, several hundred of whom became POWs, shine as unsung heroes who bravely bore the tortures of their captors. Yes, they were mistreated in Vietnamese POW camps, but measure the indignation factor!

In the very grammar of its conception, the US mission in South-east Asia must have originated as a noble effort to bring a superior way of life – albeit through unfortunate measures like napalming, carpet-bombing and destroying the forests and land of alien people who were, however, less than civilised (and communists to boot). Vietnamese government officials frequently appear in US literature and films as

savages who force POWs to play Russian roulette ('Deerhunter') or as old-fashioned Hollywood torturers and liars. 'Sometimes', the ubiquitous officer assures the reporter, 'you have to destroy a village in order to save it.'

Since 'we' are civilised and 'they' are not, the mass death and suffering inflicted by soldiers in a righteous cause merits understanding. The US 'mistake' in Vietnam was 'not winning' the war, the 'civilised' way of resolving temporal historical conflicts. ('Play, play the game', Matthew Arnold instructed.) In the US narrative on the war, with few exceptions, the very form of telling deprives the Vietnamese of moral reciprocity – indeed, of human identity.

Said's book offers students and non-students alike a pathway of understanding to the ever present but oft unstated premises of western culture, from newspaper headlines, through passages of great novels, to operas and literary criticism. From the nineteenth century on, Said argues, the reality of imperialism as a global political and economic system infected the premises of world culture. Indeed, its epistemology blanketed human thought, shaping the minds of the most talented literary figures as well as the most courageous and noble resistance leaders in the colonies and mother countries. The cultural premise of the conquerors virtually asphyxiated the narrative of the vanquished, by belittling its forms (or turning them into exotica) and imposing the imperial story as the universal way of telling.

To demonstrate his thesis, Said explores the subtexts of great nineteenth-century English, French and US literature, taking the reader on a journey between the lines of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, André Gide and a host of other writers that students either enjoyed or fought their way through in high school and college.

Austen and empire? The sensitive narrator of nineteenth-century moral ambiguities did not indulge in imperialist polemics, Said assures us, but, rather, the context of empire encompassed the daily reality of her characters – as it did for most of the characters sketched by the literary masters. When Ms Austen or Matthew Arnold make moral judgments, they assume empire and its hierarchy of values, rather than judge it. The morally impeccable Ms Austen drops into 'esthetic silence', Said notes, when Sir Thomas of *Mansfield Park* journeys to the sugar plantation in the West Indies, from whence comes his surplus wealth.

Said's point is that, in nineteenth-century England, Austen's and Dickens's characters assume empire to be an inseparable element of thought patterns, ways of speech; indeed, middle-class life style itself reflected the assumptions derived from conquest and colonisation.

Culture, as Said declares, 'is a source of identity, and a rather combative one at that'. The novel is a key form of imperial telling, from

which the careful reader discerns the weave of imperial culture. 'Stories', Said explains, 'are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonised people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history.' Thus 'the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism'. On the other side of the imperial coin, Said argues, the colonised, the vanquished, face life in a void, caught between traditional values that have lost their political and social authority and an alien way of life imposed upon them by the conquerors. Excluded from equal status, their opposition leaders seek to fill the cultural void by resurrecting remnants from the past and combining them – knowingly or not – with parts of imperial education, which contained, ironically, seeds from which antagonism to empire logically arose. If the 'other' race is morally or genetically inferior, imperial logicians aver, the dark-skinned person can never achieve true equality (even though 'all men are born equal'). So, in this cultural hierarchy, identity politics inevitably emerges – inside and outside the imperial centres.

Third World nationalism arises as one form of opposition, whose narratives not only contest imperial story-telling, but often go on to shape the past into self-justifying tales, reviving ancient quarrels and converting them into contemporary hatreds and prejudices. Vulgar nationalists have used – use – history to justify massacres – or ethnic cleansing.

Modern nationalism in conquered areas, a concept that derives from imperial thought, arises from legitimate grievances, but, like certain forms of identity politics, tends to blur class lines, reduce the commonality between oppressed people in favour of tribal, language, racial, sexual or gender definitions. Once these identities are achieved, however, the Mexican or gay boss or landlord still confronts the Mexican or gay worker or tenant. And the Serbian, Croatian and Muslim workers slay each other.

Rather than engage in militant 'blame' rhetoric, however, Said suggests a more complex approach to integrating the dialectical play between empire and literary genius, on the one hand, and conquest and resistance, on the other. He does not diminish the genius of Jane Austen, because her novels validated the premises of empire, nor just point out that her talent flourished in that context. Indeed, Said praises some of Rudyard Kipling's work as well, despite the fact that Kipling was a strong defender of imperial assumptions about inferior and superior races.

For Said, those whose genius developed within the imperial framework need to be read along with those great talents whose works opposed the imperial system. 'Critical literature has taken no cognisance of the enormously exciting, varied post-colonial literature

produced in resistance to the imperialist expansion of Europe and the United States in the past two centuries. To read Austen without also reading Fanon and Cabral ... is to disaffiliate modern culture from its engagements and attachments.'

Culture and Imperialism illuminates the current debate over future curriculum. On one side, the 'western classics' approach circumvents what Said shows to be the central historical issue of the last half of our millennium: 'All the energies poured into critical theory, into novel and demystifying theoretical praxes, like the new historicism and deconstruction and Marxism have avoided the major ... determining, political horizon of modern Western culture, namely imperialism.'

Said also rejects the narrow, albeit militant, critique that belittles the works of imperialist authors as a way of restoring a sense of dignity and meaning to people who have been beaten down – or just plain beaten. With his erudition, Said shreds the sterile debate between those advocating the predominance of western classics and the third-world-is-beautiful advocates. But Said cautions against those who would narrow their visions to exclude the talented imperialists on the basis that they were imperialists.

'No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting points...' For good or ill, Said concludes, 'imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or black, or Western, or Oriental.' He concludes that 'survival ... is about the connections between things' and that all ought to open their ears, quoting T.S. Eliot, to 'other echoes [that] inhabit the garden', as a way towards grasping reality.

Instead of resorting to the rhetoric of blame, Said insists on the 'interdependence between things'. This formula for balancing the talent of empire with the genius of anti-imperialist writing establishes the basis for an exciting curriculum. Beleaguered educational designers might well borrow this notion to help design a twenty-first-century curriculum that contains a vision of the past corresponding to a fuller and better documented reality.

It is a treat to relearn subjects once studied in high school and college, especially if it involves reviewing old novels and finding out how much was missed in the first reading. Edward Said teaches by taking the reader on a journey through the subtexts of the novels of Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, Conrad and hosts of others, so that, in the future, we might read all prose with greater scepticism. Despite some ponderous passages and repetitive sections, Said succeeds in using *Culture and Imperialism* as a pedagogical instrument.

His book appears in the confusing transition era between Cold War and a 'New' world order, between identity politics and an oft-

obfuscated struggle in which demands for justice and equality are thought to be based on skin colour, sexual or gender orientation alone rather than class affiliation. Like his masterful study of *Orientalism*, Said's new book is an enriching read for educators and thoughtful progressives.

Transnational Institute, Washington SAUL LANDAU

Expulsion of the Palestinians: the concept of 'transfer' in Zionist political thought 1882-1948

By NUR MASALHA (Washington DC, Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1992). 235pp.

The butchers of the Balkans call it 'ethnic cleansing'. While this blood-curdling term is new, the concept and the practice are anything but.

The Zionists call their version of it 'transfer'. The idea is as old as political Zionism itself – indeed, it was inherent in the very project of setting up a Jewish nation state, with an overwhelming Jewish majority, in a country inhabited by others. It was clear to all Zionist leaders – as it had been clear to the movement's founder, Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) – that if Zionist colonisation were to base itself on the exploitation of indigenous labour power (as in South Africa, Rhodesia or Algeria), then the project would be doomed, because the exploited are always the majority. Instead, the Palestinians had to be expelled – 'transferred' – to make room for Jewish colonisation.

All this has long been known. What Masalha's excellent book reveals for the first time is the centrality of transfer in Zionist thinking, the importance attributed to it by virtually all top- and middle-rank Zionist leaders. For obvious reasons, discussions of this sensitive topic were normally confidential, and the various plans were not widely published at the time. Much of the truth lay buried in archives that have only recently been declassified. Masalha, whose Hebrew is fluent, has sifted through these archives, and has come up with a great wealth of material. It transpires that transfer, far from being a marginal topic, was obsessively discussed among the Zionist leaders during most of the pre-1948 period. 'Socialist' Labour Zionists were, if anything, more enthusiastic supporters and planners of transfer than their bourgeois counterparts.

Strenuous efforts were made to sell the idea of transfer to the British authorities, who were responsible for Palestine under a League of Nations Mandate. Thus, transfer is included among the recommendations of the Royal Commission (under Lord William Peel), published in June 1937. Masalha provides evidence that this was a result of intensive Zionist lobbying in London. However, the British

government soon reconsidered its position and withdrew its support for transfer. The Zionist lobbyists had better luck with the British Labour Party, whose conferences adopted pro-transfer resolutions in December 1944 and May 1945. These have never been revoked, so that, technically speaking, the British Labour Party remains to this very day committed to supporting the 'ethnic cleansing' of Palestine.

In the light of Masalha's findings, there can no longer be any serious doubt that the Palestinian exodus of 1948-9 was, from the word go, a prime strategic aim of Zionist – and, as from 15 May 1948, Israeli – strategy. All senior commanders in the nascent Israeli army were fully aware of the fact that 'transfer' of the Palestinians had long been a central Zionist aim; and most of them acted accordingly, even without receiving official written instructions. Such instructions were hardly needed; the officers concerned knew what was expected of them.

London MOSHÉ MACHOVER

The Labour Government and the End of Empire: Part IV, Race relations and the Commonwealth

Edited by RONALD HYAM (London, HMSO, 1992). 399pp., £60.

Last year, in an article in *Race & Class* (Vol.33, no.4, 1992), I showed how authority in colonial Africa was grounded on the racial principle that white always gives orders to black, and then spelt out how historians have tended to ignore it. In particular, I instanced the numerous historians of decolonisation whose works have proliferated of recent years. Now, in the mammoth series of 'British Documents on the End of Empire', comes a volume, with the promising subtitle *Race relations and the Commonwealth*, covering the period of the first Labour government (1945-51). The subtitle is, however, misleading. Only the first fifty pages of documents are specifically concerned with race.

There is a welcome start, a 1947 despatch from Creech Jones, secretary of state for the colonies, to the colonial governors, asking for information about racial discrimination in their territories – a despatch not written for internal reasons, but because the United Nations Organisation was preparing to include 'racial discrimination' in an international Bill of Rights. He enclosed a memo detailing the legislation in the various colonial territories which discriminated between races. This revealing document, demonstrating unequivocally the racial underpinning of empire, the editor has not, however, included in the volume (but the Public Record Office reference is given for those interested – CO323/1879/5, no.4).

We hear no more on this general theme, and pass on to the

Africanisation of the Colonial Service, now slowly beginning, with a pioneer minute of 1947 by Governor Burns in the Gold Coast. But ending the white monopoly of senior colonial posts meant bringing colonial students to Britain to be educated to take them over. A Colonial Office advisory committee on students warned of the danger of racial discrimination against them. In the Colonial Office, however, the officials were chiefly afraid of the 'undesirable influences' students might come under – in particular, that communists might use the racial issue to capture them. Their own solution was to 'gain access for them to the best type of English homes', and Colonial Office 'tea-parties'. Their suggestions of legislation against racial discrimination ('if only as a gesture') or a statement against it by the prime minister were not taken up.

When the *Empire Windrush* arrived from Jamaica in 1948, the alarm bells rang. But it was still seen as an isolated, probably one-off, incident, unlikely to recur. What worried officials was not so much the immigrants' colour as 'their undisciplined behaviour when they secured employment'. A 1951 Cabinet memorandum saw no need for any action to control the inflow of 'coloured immigrants', estimated at no more than 'at least 5,000' since 1945.

The next section in the volume contains documents on social welfare policy, including education and research. None of them bear specifically on race. Nor do the subsequent documents on constitutional arrangements within the Commonwealth (though the Admiralty was worried that a British nationality law to include the whole Commonwealth which was being considered in 1949 might have to mean breaching the 'colour bar' in the navy).

The remaining third of the volume is on Southern Africa, where race, explicitly or implicitly, was a key issue. Policy had to balance the need to keep friendly with South Africa, for strategic and economic reasons, with disapproval of apartheid. Successive Commonwealth relations secretaries, Noel-Baker and Gordon Walker, refused to allow Seretse Khama to return home to Bechuanaland after his marriage to an English 'girl' (sic), for fear that it would 'inflame' opinion in South Africa. It became policy to 'contain' South Africa, to try and prevent it infecting white settlers in East Africa – 'terrible wars might even be fought', warned Gordon Walker, 'between a white-ruled Eastern Africa and a black-ruled Western Africa' – and, above all, to keep Afrikaner influence out of Southern Rhodesia. An interesting concluding series of documents illustrates how powerful this argument was in the creation of the ill-fated Central African Federation.

Useful as these documents will be to historians, they still shy away from the issue I raised in my article – just how it was that this 'essential tool of government which underpinned colonial authority', the unquestionable rule of white over black, was discarded so adroitly and

so unobtrusively that it became possible to pretend that it had never existed.

London CHRISTOPHER FYFE

The Story of Gardening

By MARTIN HOYLES (London, Journeyman and Pluto Press, 1992). 313pp., £12.95.

This book is both informative and a joy to read. It's also the only book on gardening known to me that understands exploitation when it sees it and has the guts to say so. I find it uplifting to know that people close to my heart in this, my adopted country, including Gerard Winstanley and the Diggers; William Morris, not forgetting Hoyles, have also seen exploitation and injustice while gardening or thinking about it. For I too can't help seeing exploitation and injustice in even the English lawn.

Hoyles aptly says that it used to take 'three men with scythes a whole day to cut an acre of grass' plus an unspecified number of 'lawn women' to gather up the grass cuttings. Sadly, he fails to relate this information to the present, to my mind risking, by default, the implication that a high cost as well as exploitation (albeit now by proxy) no longer accompanied the upkeep of today's lawns. He also only mentions in passing lawn-mowers. Pity, this. For I've been fascinated with the English obsession with carpet-even lawns. Indeed, one first impression of England on coming here, twenty-two years ago, was the fact that every patch of available open space in the garden, domestic as well as public, is covered with lawn. It's such a contrast to the places in three-quarters of the world known to me (especially South-east Asia and the Far East), where spaces between coppices and/or plant beds are kept bare. There, people are aware that the lawn, not existing in nature, means a series of displacements: its mere existence deprives other plants and animals that would have been naturally sustained by whatever space the lawn in question occupies. Their displacement means others' displacement. And so on further down the line. Also, such artificial lawns require an excessive amount of energy and resources to maintain. It's the ecological reason, by the way, for the 'dry gardening' with inorganic materials such as pebbles and sand which became *bel art* in ancient China and Japan.

It's unfortunate, too, that Hoyles only briefly mentions that, in 1895, William Morris was concerned about the suggestion that Epping Forest might be turned into the equivalent of today's 'theme park' or a golf course. And that, in 1905, 15,000 people successfully defended Peckham's One Tree Hill from being enclosed to make a golf course.

Hoyles, I believe, misses the chance to relate these incidents to today's figures: an 18-hole golf course uses 225 to 270 million litres of water annually. Artificially created, their soil has to be 'prepared' and 'improved' for growing the special grass which meets the Golf Association standards. In the Third World particularly, this means the use of zeolite, which contains carcinogenic materials such as aluminium, calcium, iron, kalium, magnesium, natrium, etc. To make the bottom soil of the 'lakes' non-porous, various carcinogenic soil coagulating agents such as the EC-banned Acrylamid are used. And what about that added sparkle to the lawn for the promotional films? The artificial colouring agent to buff up the lawn, too, is arguably carcinogenic. All this is not to mention the enormous amounts of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides being pumped continually into the course: some 2.7 tons in solid and 2,000 litres in liquid fertilisers and herbicides, plus 5.2 tons of chemical fertilisers. All contaminating further the ever-ebbing water sources, polluted as they are by the effluents of the western-style farming being so slavishly adopted by many Third World countries.

To continue with my English impression, another thing I soon noticed was that here, as in the West generally, gardening is mainly for pleasure. This contrasts with the parts of our world that are peripheral to capitalism, including most of the Third World, where gardening still retains its original function as an adjunct to the larder. As Hoyles more than implies, gardening for pleasure is strictly for those with surplus wealth. In the more natural world, where people have to toil to earn their bread, land is too precious to be planted only with, say, flowers. Moreover, being unnatural, pleasure gardening demands unnaturally wasteful amounts of energy and resources to maintain. This can also be gauged from the fact that when the surplus wealth begins to disappear, such as during a war or a deep economic recession, people, even in the West, revert to using their gardens to plant things they can eat as well as admire. Witness the 'Dig for Victory' phenomenon during the second world war and the fact that the popularity of allotments (both are touched upon by Hoyles) has faithfully mirrored the economy's ups and downs.

Sadly, too, Hoyles says nothing about garden follies. To my mind, follies reflect the truth about the people who flaunted them. They represent the profligacy that only colonial and/or neocolonial plunderers could afford. This explains why not even the most notorious of the proverbial eastern potentates' most sumptuous gardens had follies of the same scale and grandeur as Europe's gardens, and that it was Britain (with the most colonies) which boasted the grandest and the most magnificent of follies.

It's in reminding us that innumerable plants of our 'English' (and for that matter 'European') garden were originally plundered – 'botanised', in Hoyles's useful term, or, to use the Victorian 'plant gatherer' Robert

Fortune's 'ransacked' – from the colonies and/or semi-colonies that the book makes a major contribution. In fact, it's the only non-specialist gardening book that reminds us that buddleia, clematis, chrysanthemum and rhododendrons are but a few of the most commonly found flowers in our gardens that were taken from China, while species of carnation, hollyhock, jasmine and primrose came from Persia and Turkey. Cinchona, the source of quinine that cures malaria, was smuggled out of South America in 1640. It enabled Europe's colonial plunderers to penetrate deeper into Africa and continental Asia. As a British army surgeon-major wrote in 1879, 'it is not too much to say that if portions of ... [England's] tropical empire are upheld by the bayonet, the arm that wields the weapon would be nerveless but for Cinchona bark'.

All in all, this book is a must for anyone who can't pretend that everything in the garden is lovely: those who, while sometimes dreaming blissfully in the garden, also play their parts in the universal struggle for justice. As Hoyles says, 'Why not make a garden *and* sit down in Trafalgar Square?' Indeed, '*Yes it is bread we fight for ... but we fight for roses too*'!

London A.R.T. KEMASANG

Enlightened Racism: the Cosby Show, audiences and the myth of the American dream

By SUT JHALLY and JUSTIN LEWIS (Boulder, Westview Press, 1992). 152pp.

The Cosby Show has generated more heated debate than most TV sitcoms could ever aspire to. Although it has now fallen from its top slot as the most watched programme on American television, it still continues to generate immense controversy. This excellent book manages to address all the associated arguments with admirable clarity. The suspicion generated by the acknowledgement that this enterprise was supported by Bill Cosby and his real life wife, Camille, recedes when the text is read. Objectivity may well be an unattainable goal, but Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis are thoroughly judicious and balanced in their judgments.

In support of the Cosby Show, the authors suggest that the sitcom optimises the opportunities of the genre by depicting a successful black middle-class family that deals with life and all its concomitant problems in a caring and non-sexist way. It is also seen as providing an attractive role-model for aspiring African-Americans, while subtly negating old stereotypes of 'stupid' or 'lazy' black people. On the other side, the obvious criticisms of the show are underlined – its lack of realism, when the majority of African-Americans would aspire in vain

to a Huxtable lifestyle. Even if economic prospects were more hopeful, this programme would still be misleading in its implicit support for 'the American dream'; the idea that anyone, of any colour or sex, can be successful if they strive with enough industry and determination.

Audience analysis is at the core of this study and it was middle-class viewers, of every ethnic group, who perceived the Huxtables as 'real' and 'believable' because they could concentrate on the intrafamily relationships rather than the social context. The 'conjuring trick' is that this far wealthier than average family is made to seem 'regular' or 'just like us' to a disproportionately large segment of the viewing community. Some viewers did, in fact, describe the Cosby Show as a 1980s fairy tale and many black families felt the logic displayed in the achievements of the Cosbys was deceptive. Yet the authors point out that a more positive image of black people has been presented generally on television as a result of the Cosby Show's popularity.

In the final analysis, however, the authors argue coherently that the overall impact of the show is negative, in that it diverts attention from the class-based causes of racial inequality. It also 'throws a veil of confusion over black people who are trying to comprehend the inequities of modern racism. It derails dissatisfaction with the system and converts it, almost miraculously, into acceptance of its values.' In a culture where institutionalised racism remains unacknowledged and the pervasiveness of unequal socio-economic and educational circumstances is denied, 'the political consequences of this acceptance are, for black people, disastrous'.

University of Keele MARY ELLISON

The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951

By ILAN PAPPÉ (London, I.B. Taurus, 1992). 324pp., £39.50 cloth.

By curious coincidence, the Palestinian uprising against Israeli military occupation was, during its first year, accompanied by the appearance of a number of books by Israeli scholars which, based upon recently declassified state archives, questioned the most sacred founding myths of the Jewish state and, by implication, those dogmas which ensure continued public support for its retention of the occupied territories. In quick succession, Zionist canons about the dispossession of the Palestinian people, the 1947-49 Arab-Israeli war, and the failure to achieve a negotiated settlement in the years immediately succeeding it were conclusively disposed of, even if, in certain respects, they were replaced by dubious and unsubstantiated interpretations.

Apart from the issues raised, the prominence achieved by these publications is itself a case study in intellectual power. Although they

have added numerous details to our knowledge of the establishment of the Israeli state and are generally of a very high standard, overall, there is fairly little that had not been previously demonstrated or at least argued by Palestinian and other (not excluding Israeli) writers. That this group consists of professional Israeli scholars utilising declassified Israeli documents, however, has invested them with an almost unchallengeable aura of credibility. So much so that Benny Morris, after dismissing out of hand previous generations of Israeli writers and simply ignoring those of different or no citizenship, has ventured so far as to label this group (of which he is perhaps the most prominent member) 'the new historians'.

Ilan Pappé's *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* is the latest addition to this genre. Utilising an impressive range of American, British and Israeli state archives (Arab state archives remain sealed), as well as Arabic, English and Hebrew publications, its author argues that the fate of Palestine and the Palestinians was determined not by war, but rather by politics 'long before even one shot had been fired'. His underlying purpose is to challenge the Israeli myth that the Arab states during the late 1940s deprived the Zionist movement of a diplomatic option and that Israel, therefore, had to be forged in battle against superior odds. While Pappé skilfully refutes each element of this fiction, a number of his conclusions unfortunately fail to correspond to the evidence presented.

Among the subjects most extensively treated by Pappé are the United Nations, Zionist/Israeli strategic aims, inter-Arab politics and Arab-Israeli negotiations, and it is these which form the centrepiece of his thesis. He demonstrates that the United Nations, in no small part due to Soviet-American preponderance, held an institutional bias in favour of Jewish statehood; that the outcome of the Palestine war reflected the strategic intentions of the Zionist movement rather than unanticipated wartime developments; that the Arab states did not possess adequate military resources successfully to confront a nascent Israeli state and were too divided politically even to attempt a coordinated effort to that end; and that during post-war negotiations, an Israel confident of its military superiority, and unwilling to alter the new territorial-demographic realities it had created, effectively set the stage for further conflict.

Pappé's discussion of Arab military preparedness is particularly interesting, revealing a rather small combined force starved of essential supplies at a time when Zionist/Israeli military strength was continually expanding. But, more importantly, Arab political leaders, as a result of either coordination with the Zionist movement or competition with each other, were not committed to preventing Jewish statehood and acted primarily in response to massive public pressure. Unfortunately, however, Pappé does not address the substantially lower

figures for Arab military strength given by Walid Khalidi, a significant omission given the latter's reliance on official Arab sources. And, more importantly, he later directly contradicts himself by claiming 'clear parity on the battlefield' between Israel and the Arab states.

But Pappé does consider both Khalidi and Morris's views on the origins of the Palestinian exodus, which the former ascribes to Zionist policy and the latter to an accident of war, and successfully lays bare the inconsistencies in Morris's argument in support of Khalidi's pioneering scholarship. In the process, however, Pappé curiously ascribes Zionist territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing to 'retaliation', rather than to what he himself terms 'a master plan for the expulsion of as many Palestinians as possible'.

These and several other inconsistencies notwithstanding, this is both a valuable and a carefully researched and written book which serves as an excellent introduction to revisionist Israeli historiography.

St Antony's College, Oxford MOUIN RABBANI

Born to die in Medellin

By ALONSO SALAZAR (London, Latin America Bureau, 1992). 130pp., £5.99.

This is a disturbing book. Its subject matter, violence in Medellin, the 'murder capital of the world', distresses. But it's more than just the subject. The book disturbs on a very profound level because it forces the reader into an uncomfortable relationship with the protagonists of the violence – young murderers who speak of contract killings in matter of fact terms. Based on a series of interviews, which are given to you direct, preserving individual voices and emotions, it is as though you were overhearing the murderers' confessions. And, like the priest (also the subject of an interview), you must listen and not judge; attempt to 'try and understand their difficult reality' in order (in the words of the priest) 'to snatch the new generation from the clutches of death'.

In the introduction, Colin Harding outlines the roots of the violence. From the mid-1940s to the late 1950s, at least 200,000 people died in an orgy of political violence. Largely a rural phenomenon, '*La Violencia*' had social, economic and political causes. Gunmen were hired by large landowners to evict farmers from the land and steal their coffee, forcing farmers to migrate from the countryside to the towns. But the violence, now mixed into an urban cocktail, migrated too. The Medellin drugs cartel came on the scene in the 1970s, and a large pool of unemployed, poorly educated young people became fodder for the drug barons. The presence of the cocaine '*capos*', as they are called, in turn spawned vigilante squads.

Today, the victims of the violence are getting younger and younger. In 1989, some 70 per cent of all those who met violent deaths were aged between 14 and 20. The term for the kids, aged between 12 and 13, recruited into the gangs is '*desechables*' – the disposable ones. 'Are these young people, the expression of a new culture, a culture of death?' asks Salazar.

But this is no 'blame the culture of the victim' exercise. Salazar is quick to point out that this modern 'culture of death', just as *La Violencia* before it, is rooted in a wider political and social phenomenon. When the political system itself is so degraded that violence is used as a means of silencing opposition (politicians routinely – and anonymously – hire the gangs to carry out assassinations), what hope for the inhabitants of the '*comunas*' (poor neighbourhoods)? When the prison system, described by an inmate as the 'University of Evil', is built on a culture of degradation (a mutiny at the notorious Bellavista prison in 1989 led to the deaths of thirteen prisoners and three warders), what hope for the rehabilitation of the murderer? When the import of western culture and life style leads to the constant bombardment, via cinema and advertising, of images of luxury, speed, excitement, why be surprised when the 'have nots', in order to participate in society's wealth, steal and kill? 'The contract killers take the consumer society to its extreme: they turn life (their own and that of their victims) into a commodity to deal in, into a disposable object. In return, death has become a part of everyday life. It has become normal to kill and be killed.'

So, what hope? The very fact that the Instituto Popular de Capacitacion and the Corporation Region have funded a study not academic, but engaged with and immersed in the lives of the victims and instigators (for they are both at the same time) of the violence is a sign that the cycle can be broken. As, too, are the confessions of the murderers. Antonio is a 20-year-old contract killer. As he approaches death in Saint Vincent de Paul hospital, his body riddled with bullets, he finds evocative words and images to describe his life:

> The city at night is fabulous, it's all light and darkness. I feel just like one of those dots, lost in a sea of light. That's what we are, a tiny light, or maybe a patch of darkness. In the end, we're all or nothing. We can do great things, but we're all mortal ... The city at night is a screen, a lot of images that flash in front of your eyes. Take a good look at the buildings in the centre. They're pointed-headed monsters. You can see their long arms stretching out, trying to catch something. It's us they're trying to grab. But we're as high and as far away as a cloud. We're on the heights where we can look down on everything, where nothing can touch us. We're the lords of all creation.

Institute of Race Relations LIZ FEKETE

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