RACE & CLASS

Volume XVIII Spring 1977 Number 4

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Cynthia Cockburn — The local state: management of cities and people

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Notes and documents — Book reviews

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A. SIVANANDAN

The liberation of the black intellectual

The President of Illinois University might have correctly advised Theodore Roosevelt in 1910 that setting up a university in China, to develop an intellectual elite in tune with America's interests and aspirations, would do more to turn that country into a client state than an entire army. But by the middle of the century, two revolutions and many independences later, the tactic had changed (though the strategy remained) to accord with the new colonialism, and led to the reproduction of a comprador class of third world intellectuals in the universities of the metropolis itself. Hence aid and scholarships, Fulbright and Nuffield, Carnegie and Ford and Gulbenkian.

But after the betrayal of their metropolitan mentors by students like Ho Chi Minh and Khieu Samphan, Cabral and Neto — and Machel and Mondlane and Nkrumah and so many else — after the student ferments in third world countries that have bordered on class war — after the black youth revolts in the metropolis — the strategy of manufacturing a comprador class for export to third world countries has begun to be less than profitable. The scholarships are ceasing, the aid drying up, the fees for overseas students prohibitive. Only within the metropolis itself does the turning-out of a collaborator class continue to be both feasible and necessary. But here too questions are being raised by black youth in higher education as to their role and function in a racist society.*

And it is as a contribution to this debate that we reprint below an article which charts the black intellectual's journey — his stations of the cross — from race to class, from 'taking conscience of himself' to coming to consciousness of class. First written in 1972 for a symposium on 'immigrant intellectuals' in Britain and later published as 'Alien Gods' (in Colour, Culture and Consciousness. *Allen and*

A. SIVANANDAN is Director of the Institute of Race Relations, London.

* See 'Race, class and the state...' in the Spring 1976 issue of this journal.

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Unwin, 1974), we republish the piece in its original form despite its cultural bias. For, as Cabral has pointed out, the domination of a people, whatever its material determinants, 'can be maintained only by the permanent organized repression of [their] cultural life'. Or as Sivanandan implies in this essay, economics determines society, culture defines it.

The editorial staff

> Wherever colonization is a fact, the indigenous culture begins to rot. And among the ruins something begins to be born which is not a culture but a kind of sub-culture, a sub-culture which is condemned to exist on the margin allowed by an European culture. This then becomes the province of a few men, the elite, who find themselves placed in the most artificial conditions, deprived of any revivifying contact with the masses of the people.
>
> *Aimé Césaire*[1]

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

At the height of colonial rule, he is the servitor of those in power, offering up his people in return for crumbs of privilege; at its end, he turns servant of the people, negotiating their independence even as he attains to power. Outwardly, he favours that part of him which is turned towards his native land. He puts on the garb of nationalism, vows a return to tradition. He helps design a national flag, compose a People's Anthem. He puts up with the beat of the tom-tom and the ritual of the circumcision ceremony. But privately, he lives in the manner of his masters, affecting their style and their values, assuming their privileges and status. And for a while he succeeds in holding these two worlds together, the outer and the inner, deriving the best of both. But the forces of nationalism on the one hand and the virus of colonial privilege on the other, drive him once more into the margin of existence. In despair he turns himself to Europe. With something like belonging, he looks towards the Cathedral at Chartres and Windsor Castle, Giambologna and Donizetti and Shakespeare and Verlaine, snow-drops and roses. He must be done, once and for all, with the waywardness and uncouth manners of his people, released from their endemic ignorance, delivered from witchcraft and voodoo, from the heat and the chattering mynah-bird, from the

incessant beat of the tom-tom. He must return to the country of his mind.

But even as the 'coloured' intellectual enters the mother country, he is entered into another world where his colour, and not his intellect or his status, begins to define his life — he is entered into another relationship with himself. The porter (unless he is black), the immigration officer (who is never anything but white), the customs official, the policeman of whom he seeks directions, the cabman who takes him to his lodgings, and the landlady who takes him in at a price — none of them leaves him in any doubt that he is not merely not welcome in their country, but should in fact be going back — to where he came from. That indeed is their only curiosity, their only interest: where he comes from, which particular jungle, Asian, African or Caribbean.

There was a time when he had been received warmly, but he was at Oxford then and his country was still a colony. Perhaps equality was something that the British honoured in the abstract. Or perhaps his 'equality' was something that was precisely defined and set within the enclave of Empire. He had a place somewhere in the imperial class structure. But within British society itself there seemed no place for him. Not even his upper-class affectations, his BBC accent, his well-pressed suit and college tie afford him a niche in the carefully defined inequalities of British life. He feels himself not just an outsider or different, but invested, as it were, with a separate inequality: outside and inferior at the same time.

At that point, his self-assurance which had sat on him 'like a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire'[2] takes a cruel blow. But he still has his intellect, his expertise, his qualifications to fall back on. He redeems his self-respect with another look at his Oxford diploma (to achieve which he had put his culture in pawn). But his applications for employment remain unanswered, his letters of introduction unattended. It only needs the employment officer's rejection of his qualifications, white though they be, to dispel at last his intellectual pretensions.

The certainty finally dawns on him that his colour is the only measure of his worth, the sole criterion of his being. Whatever his claims to white culture and white values, whatever his adherence to white norms, he is first and last a no-good nigger, a bleeding wog or just plain black bastard. His colour is the only reality allowed him; but a reality which, to survive, he must learn to cope with. Once more he is caught between two worlds: accepting his colour and rejecting it, or accepting it only to reject it — aping still the white man (though now with conscious effort at survival), playing the white man's game (though now aware that he changes the rules so as to keep on winning), even forcing the white man to concede a victory or two (out of his hideous patronage, his grotesque paternalism). He

accepts that it is their country and not his, rationalizes their grievances against him, acknowledges the chip on his shoulder (which he knows is really a beam in their eye), and, ironically, by virtue of staying in his place, moves up a position or two — in the area, invariably, of race relations.* For it is here that his skilled ambivalence finds the greatest scope, his colour the greatest demand. Once more he comes into his own — as servitor of those in power, a buffer between them and his people, a shock-absorber of 'coloured discontent' — in fact, a 'coloured' intellectual.

But this is an untenable position. As the racial 'scene' gets worse, and racism comes to reside in the very institutions of white society, the contradictions inherent in the marginal situation of the 'coloured' intellectual begin to manifest themselves. As a 'coloured' he is outside white society, in his intellectual functions he is outside black. For if, as Sartre has pointed out, 'that which defines an intellectual ... is the profound contradiction between the universality which bourgeois society is obliged to allow his scholarship, and the restricted ideological and political domain in which he is forced to apply it',[3] there is for the 'coloured' intellectual no role in an 'ideological and political domain', shot through and through with racism, which is not fundamentally antipathetic to his colour and all that it implies. But for that very reason, his contradiction, in contrast to that of his white counterpart, is perceived not just intellectually or abstractly, but in his very existence. It is for him, a living, palpitating reality, demanding resolution.

Equally, the universality allowed his scholarship is, in the divided world of a racist society, different to that of the white intellectual. It is a less universal universality, as it were, and subsumed to the universality of white scholarship. But it is precisely because it is a universality that is particular to colour that it is already keened to the sense of oppression. So that when Sartre tells us that the intellectual, in grasping his contradictions, puts himself on the side of the oppressed ('because, in principle, universality is on that side'),[4] it is clear that the 'coloured' intellectual, at the moment of grasping his contradictions, *becomes* the oppressed — is reconciled to himself and his people, or rather, to himself in his people.**

To put it differently. Although the intellectual qua intellectual can, in 'grasping his contradiction', take the *position* of the oppressed, he cannot, by virtue of his class (invariably petty-bourgeois) achieve an instinctual understanding of oppression. The 'coloured' man, on the

*The British media uses the 'coloured intellectual', whatever his field of work, as white Africa uses the Chief: as a spokesman for his tribe.

**If this man manages to compromise, to hide from things; if he succeeds, by some kind of pretence, vacillation or balancing act, in not living that contradiction ... I do not call him an intellectual; I consider him simply a functionary, a practical theoretician of the bourgeoisie.' Jean-Paul Sartre, in 'Intellectuals and Revolution'.

other hand, has, by virtue of his colour, an *instinct* of oppression, unaffected by his class, though muted by it. So that the 'coloured' intellectual, in resolving his contradiction as an intellectual, resolves also his existential contradiction. In coming to consciousness of the oppressed, he 'takes conscience of himself',[5] in taking conscience of himself, he comes to consciousness of the oppressed. The fact of his intellect which had alienated him from his people now puts him on their side, the fact of his colour which had connected him with his people, restores him finally to their ranks. And at that moment of reconciliation between instinct and position, between the existential and the intellectual, between the subjective and objective realities of his oppression, he is delivered from his marginality and stands revealed as neither 'coloured' nor 'intellectual' — but BLACK.*

He accepts now the full burden of his colour. With Césaire, he cries:

> I accept ... I accept ... entirely, without
> reservation...
> my race which no ablution of hyssop mingled with
> lilies can ever purify
>
> my race gnawed by blemishes
> my race ripe grapes from drunken feet
> my queen of spit and leprosies
> my queen of whips and scrofulae
> my queen of squamae and chlosmae
> (O royalty whom I have loved in the far gardens of
> spring lit by chestnut candles!)
> I accept. I accept.[6]

And accepting, he seeks to define. But black, he discovers, finds definition not in its own right but as the opposite of white.** Hence in order to define himself, he must first define the white man. But to do so on the white man's terms would lead him back to self-denigration. And yet the only tools of intellection available to him are white tools — white language, white education, white systems of thought — the

*Black is here used to symbolize the oppressed, as white the oppressor. Colonial oppression was uniform in its exploitation of the races (black, brown and yellow) making a distinction between them only in the interests of further exploitation — by playing one race against the other and, within each race, one class against the other — generally the Indians against the blacks, the Chinese against the browns, and the coolies against the Indian and Chinese middle class. In time these latter came to occupy, in East Africa and Malaysia for example, a position akin to a comprador class. Whether it is this historical fact which today makes for their comprador role in British society is not, however, within the scope of this essay. But it is interesting to note how an intermediate colour came to be associated with an intermediate role.

**'Black: opposite to white.' *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. 'White: morally or spiritually pure or stainless, spotless, innocent. Free from malignity or evil intent, innocent, harmless esp. as opp. to something characterized as *black*.' *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*.

very things that alienate him from himself. Whatever tools are native to him lie beyond his consciousness somewhere, condemned to desuetude by white centuries. But to use white tools to uncover the white man so that he (the black) may at last find definition requires that the tools themselves are altered in their use. In the process, the whole of white civilization comes into question, black culture is re-assessed, and the very fabric of bourgeois society threatened.

Take language, for instance. A man's whole world, as Fanon points out, is 'expressed and implied by his language':[7] it is a way of thinking, of feeling, of be-ing. It is identity. It is, in Valéry's grand phrase, 'the god gone astray in the flesh'.[8] But the language of the colonized man is another man's language. In fact it is his oppressor's and must, of its very nature, be inimical to him — to his people and his gods. Worse, it creates alien gods. Alien gods 'gone astray in the flesh' — white gods in black flesh — a canker in the rose. No, that is not quite right, for white gods, like roses, are beautiful things, it is the black that is cancerous. So one should say a 'rose in the canker'. But that is not quite right either — neither in its imagery nor in what it is intended to express. How does one say it then? How does one express the holiness of the heart's disaffection (*pace* Keats) and 'the truth of the imagination' in a language that is false to one? How does one communicate the burden of one's humanity in a language that dehumanizes one in the very act of communication?

Two languages, then, one for the colonizer and another for the colonized — and yet within the same language? How to reconcile this ambivalence? A patois, perhaps: a spontaneous, organic rendering of the masters' language to the throb of native sensibilities — some last grasp at identity, at wholeness.

But dialect betrays class. The 'pidgin-nigger-talker' is an ignorant man. Only common people speak pidgin. Conversely, when the white man speaks it, it is only to show the native how common he really is. It is a way of 'classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivizing him'.[9]

Or perhaps the native has a language of his own; even a literature. But compared to English (or French) his language is dead, his literature passé. They have no place in a modern, industrialized world. They are for yesterday's people. Progress is English, education is English, the good things in life (in the world the colonizer made) are English, the way to the top (and white civilization leaves the native in no doubt that that is the purpose of life) is English. His teachers see to it that he speaks it in school, his parents that he speaks it at home — even though they are rejected by their children for their own ignorance of *the* tongue.

But if the colonizer's language creates an 'existential deviation'[10] in the native, white literature drives him further from himself. It

disorientates him from his surroundings: the heat, the vegetation, the rhythm of the world around him. Already, in childhood, he writes school essays on 'the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness'. He learns of good and just government from Rhodes and Hastings and Morgan. In the works of the great historian, Thomas Carlyle, he finds that 'poor black Quashee ... a swift supple fellow, a merry-hearted, grinning, dancing, singing, affectionate kind of creature ...' could indeed be made into a 'handsome glossy thing' with a 'pennyworth of oil', but 'the tacit prayer he makes (unconsciously he, poor block-head) to you and to me and to all the world who are wiser than himself is "compel me" ' — to work.[11] In the writings of the greatest playwright in the world, he discovers that he is Caliban and Othello and Aaron, in the testaments of the most civilized religion that he is for ever cursed to slavery. With William Blake, the great revolutionary poet and painter, mystic and savant, he is convinced that:

> My mother bore me in the southern wild,
> And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
> White as an angel is the English child,
> But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.[12]

Yet, this is the man who wrote 'The Tyger'. And the little black boy, who knows all about tigers, understands the great truth of Blake's poem, is lost in wonderment at the man's profound imagination. What then of the other Blake? Was it only animals he could imagine himself into? Did he who wrote 'The Tyger' write 'The Little Black Boy'?

It is not just the literature of the language, however, that ensnares the native into 'whititude', but its grammar, its syntax, its vocabulary. They are all part of the trap. Only by destroying the trap can he escape it. 'He has', as Genet puts it, 'only one recourse: to accept this language but to corrupt it so skilfully that the white men are caught in his trap.'[13] He must blacken the language, suffuse it with his own darkness, and liberate it from the presence of the oppressor.

In the process, he changes radically the use of words, word-order — sounds, rhythm, imagery — even grammar. For, he recognizes with Laing that even 'syntax and vocabulary are political acts that define and circumscribe the manner in which facts are experienced, [and] indeed ... create the facts that are studied'.[14] In effect he brings to the language the authority of his particular experience and alters thereby the experience of the language itself. He frees it of its racial oppressiveness (black *is* beautiful), invests it with 'the universality inherent in the human condition'.[15] And he writes:

> As there are hyena-men and panther-men
> so I shall be a Jew man
> a Kaffir man
> a Hindu-from-Calcutta man
> a man-from-Harlem-who-hasn't-got-the-vote.[16]

The discovery of black identity had equated the 'coloured' intellectual with himself, the definition of it equates him with all men. But it is still a definition arrived at by negating a negative, by rejecting what is not. And however positive that rejection, it does not by itself make for a positive identity. For that reason, it tends to be self-conscious and overblown. It equates the black man to other men on an existential (and intellectual) level, rather than on a political one.

But to 'positivize' his identity, the black man must go back and rediscover himself — in Africa and Asia — not in a frenetic search for lost roots, but in an attempt to discover living tradition and values. He must find, that is, a historical sense, 'which is a sense of the timeless as well as the temporal, and of the timeless and temporal together'[17] and which 'involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence'.[18] Some of that past he still carries within him, no matter that it has been mislaid in the Caribbean for over four centuries. It is the presence of that past, the living presence, that he now seeks to discover. And in discovering where he came from he realizes more fully where he is at, and where, in fact, he is going to.

He discovers, for instance, that in Africa and Asia, there still remains, despite centuries of white rule, an attitude towards learning which is simply a matter of curiosity, a quest for understanding — an understanding of not just the 'metalled ways' on which the world moves, but of oneself, one's people, others whose life styles are alien to one's own — an understanding of both the inscape and fabric of life. Knowledge is not a goal in itself, but a path to wisdom; it bestows not privilege so much as duty, not power so much as responsibility. And it brings with it a desire to learn even as one teaches, to teach even as one learns. It is used not to compete with one's fellow beings for some unending standard of life, but to achieve for them, as for oneself, a higher quality of life.

'We excel', declares the African,

> neither in mysticism nor in science and technology, but in the field of human relations ... By loving our parents, our brothers, our sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces, and by regarding them as members of our families, we cultivate the habit of loving lavishly, of exuding human warmth, of compassion, and of giving and helping ... Once so conditioned, one behaves in this way not only to one's family, but also to the clan, the tribe, the nation, and to humanity as a whole.[19]

Chisiza is here speaking of the unconfined nature of love in African (and Asian) societies (not, as a thousand sociologists would have us believe, of 'the extended family system'), in marked contrast to western societies where the love between a man and a woman (and

their children) is sufficient unto itself, seldom opening them out, albeit through each other, to a multitude of loves. The heart needs the practice of love as much as the mind its thought.

The practical expression of these values is no better illustrated than in the socialist policies of Nyerere's Tanzania. It is a socialism particular to African conditions, based on African tradition, requiring an African (Swahili) word to define it. *Ujamaa* literally means 'family-hood'. 'It brings to the mind of our people the idea of mutual involvement in the family as we know it.'[20] And this idea of the family is the sustaining principle of Tanzanian society. It stresses cooperative endeavour rather than individual advancement. It requires respect for the traditional knowledge and wisdom of one's elders, illiterate though they be, no less than for academic learning. But the business of the educated is not to fly away from the rest of society on the wings of their skills, but to turn those skills to the service of their people. And the higher their qualifications, the greater their duty to serve. 'Intellectual arrogance', the Mwalimu has declared, 'has no place in a society of equal citizens.'[21]

The intellectual, that is, has no special privilege in such a society. He is as much an organic part of the nation as anyone else. His scholarship makes him no more than other people and his functions serve no interest but theirs. There is no dichotomy here between status and function. Hence he is not presented with the conflict between the universal and the particular of which Sartre speaks. And in that sense he is not an intellectual but everyman.

The same values obtain in the societies of Asia, sustained not so much by the governments of the day as in the folklore and tradition of their peoples. The same sense of 'family-hood', of the need to be confirmed by one's fellow man, the notion of duty as opposed to privilege, the preoccupation with truth rather than fact and a concept of life directed to the achievement of unity in diversity, characterize the Indian ethos. One has only to look at Gandhi's revolution to see how in incorporating, in its theory and its practice, the traditions of his people, a 'half-naked fakir' was able to forge a weapon that took on the whole might of the British empire and beat it. Or one turns to the early literature and art of India and finds there that the poet is less important than his poem, the artist more anonymous than his art. As Benjamin Rowland remarks: 'Indian art is more the history of a society and its needs than the history of individual artists.'[22] The artist, like any other individual, intellectual or otherwise, belongs to the community, not the community to him. And what he conveys is not so much his personal experience of truth as the collective vision of a society of which he is part, expressed not in terms private to him and his peers, but in familiar language — or in symbols, the common language of truth.

In western society, on the other hand, art creates its own coterie. It

is the province of the specially initiated, carrying with it a language and a life-style of its own, even creating its own society. It sets up cohorts of interpreters and counter-interpreters, middlemen, known to the trade as *critics*, who in disembowelling his art show themselves more powerful, more creative than the artist. It is they who tell the mass of the people how they should experience art. And the more rarified it is, more removed from the experience of the common people, the greater is the artist's claim to *art* and the critic's claim to authority. Did but the artist speak directly to the people and from them, the critic would become irrelevant, and the artist symbiotic with his society.

It is not merely in the field of art, however, that western society shows itself fragmented, inorganic and expert-oriented. But the fact that it does so in the noblest of man's activities is an indication of the alienation that such a society engenders in all areas of life. In contrast to the traditions of Afro-Asian countries, European civilization appears to be destructive of human love and cynical of human life. And nowhere do these traits manifest themselves more clearly than in the attitude towards children and the treatment of the old. Children are not viewed as a challenge to one's growth, the measure of one's possibilities, but as a people apart, another generation, with other values, other standards, other aspirations. At best one keeps pace with them, puts on the habit of youth, feigns interest in their interests, but seldom if ever comprehends them. Lacking openness and generosity of spirit, the ability to live dangerously with each other, the relationship between child and adult is rarely an organic one. The adult occupies the world of the child far more than the child occupies the world of the adult. In the result, the fancy and innocence of children are crabbed and soured by adulthood even before they are ready to beget choice.

Is it any wonder then that this tradition of indifference should pass on back to the old from their children? But it is a tradition that is endemic to a society given to ceaseless competition and ruthless rivalry — where even education is impregnated with the violence of divisiveness, and violence itself stems not from passion (an aspect of the personal), but from cold and calculated reason (an aspect of the impersonal). When to get and to spend is more virtuous than to be and to become, even lovers cannot abandon themselves to each other, but must work out the debit and credit of emotion, a veritable balance-sheet of love. Distrust and selfishness and hypocrisy in personal relationships, and plain cruelty and self-aggrandisement in the art of government are the practice of such a society, however elevating its principles. Government itself is the art of keeping power from the people under the guise of the people's will. And the working people themselves are inveigled into acquiescence of the power structure by another set of middlemen: the union bosses.

In the face of all this, the black man in a white society — the black man, that is, who has 'taken conscience of himself', established at last a positive identity — comes to see the need for radical change in both the values and structure of that society. But even the revolutionary ideologies that envisage such a change are unable to take into their perspective the nature of his particular oppression and its implications for revolutionary strategy. White radicals continue to maintain that colour oppression is no more than an aspect of class oppression, that colour discrimination is only another aspect of working-class exploitation, that the capitalist system is the common enemy of the white worker and black alike. Hence they require that the colour line be subsumed to the class line and are satisfied that the strategies worked out for the white proletariat serve equally the interests of the black. The black struggle, therefore, should merge with and find direction from the larger struggle of the working class as a whole. Without white numbers, anyway, the black struggle on its own would be unavailing.

But what these radicals fail to realize is that the black man, by virtue of his particular oppression, is closer to his bourgeois brother (by colour) than to his white comrade. Indeed his white comrade is a party to his oppression. He too benefits from the exploitation of the black man, however indirectly, and tends to hold the black worker to areas of work which he himself does not wish to do, and from areas of work to which he himself aspires, irrespective of skill. In effect, the black workers constitute that section of the working class which is at the very bottom of society and is distinguished by its colour. Conversely, the attitude of racial superiority on the part of white workers relegates their black comrades to the bottom of society. In the event, they come to constitute a class apart, an under-class: the sub-proletariat. And the common denominator of capitalist oppression is not sufficient to bind them together in a common purpose.

A common understanding of racial oppression, on the other hand, ranges the black worker on the side of the black bourgeois against their common enemy: the white man, worker and bourgeois alike.

In terms of analysis, what the white marxists fail to grasp is that the slave and colonial exploitation of the black peoples of the world was so total and devastating — and so systematic in its devastation — as to make mock of working-class exploitation. Admittedly, the economic aspects of colonial exploitation may find analogy in white working-class history. But the cultural and psychological dimensions of black oppression are quite unparalleled. For, in their attempt to rationalize and justify to their other conscience 'the robbery, enslavement, and continued exploitation of their coloured victims all over the globe',[23] the conquistadors of Europe set up such a mighty edifice of racial and cultural superiority, replete with its own theology of goodness, that the natives were utterly disoriented and

dehumanized. Torn from their past, reified in the present, caught for ever in the prison of their skins, accepting the white man's definition of themselves as 'the quintessence of evil ... representing not only the absence of values but the negation of values ... the corrosive element disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality',[24] violated and sundered in every aspect of their being, it is a wonder that, like lemmings, they did not throw themselves in the sea. If the white workers' lot at the hands of capitalism was alienation, the blacks underwent complete deracination. And it is this factor which makes black oppression qualitatively different from the oppression of the white working class.

The inability of white marxists to accept the full import of such an analysis on the part of black people may be alleged to the continuing paternalism of a culture of which they themselves are victims. (Marxism, after all, was formulated in an European context and must, on its own showing, be Europocentric.) Or it may be that to understand fully the burden of blackness, they require the imagination and feeling systematically denied them by their culture. But more to the point is that, in their preoccupation with the economic factors of capitalist oppression, they have ignored the importance of its existential consequences, in effect its consequences to culture. The whole structure of white racism is built no doubt on economic exploitation, but it is cemented with white culture. In other words, the racism inherent in white society is *determined* economically, but *defined* culturally. And any revolutionary ideology that is relevant to the times must envisage not merely a change in the ownership of the means of production, but a definition of that ownership: who shall own, whites only or blacks as well? It must envisage, that is, a fundamental change in the concepts of man and society contained in white culture — it must envisage a revolutionary culture. For, as Gramsci has said, revolutionary theory requires a revolutionary culture.

But to revolutionize a culture, one needs first to make a radical assessment of it. That assessment, that revolutionary perspective, by virtue of his historical situation, is provided by the black man. For it is with the cultural manifestations of racism in his daily life that he must contend. Racial prejudice and discrimination, he recognizes, are not a matter of individual attitudes, but the sickness of a whole society carried in its culture. And his survival as a *black* man in white society requires that he constantly questions and challenges every aspect of white life even as he meets it. White speech, white schooling, white law, white work, white religion, white love, even white lies — they are all measured on the touchstone of his experience. He discovers, for instance, that white schools make for white superiority, that white law equals one law for the white and another for the black, that white work relegates him to the worst jobs

irrespective of skill, that even white Jesus and white Marx who are supposed to save him are really not in the same street, so to speak, as black Gandhi and black Cabral. In his everyday life he fights the particulars of white cultural superiority, in his conceptual life he fights the ideology of white cultural hegemony. In the process he engenders not perhaps a revolutionary culture, but certainly a revolutionary practice within that culture.

For that practice to blossom into a revolutionary culture, however, requires the participation of the masses, not just the blacks. This does not mean, though, that any ad hoc coalition of forces would do. Coalitions, in fact, are what will not do. Integration, by any other name, has always spelt death — for the blacks. To integrate with the white masses before they have entered into the practice of cultural change would be to emasculate the black cultural revolution. Any integration at this stage would be a merging of the weaker into the stronger, the lesser into the greater. The weakness of the blacks stems from the smallness of their numbers, the 'less-ness' from the bourgeois cultural consciousness of the white working class. Before an organic fusion of forces can take place, two requirements need to be fulfilled. The blacks must through the consciousness of their colour, through the consciousness, that is, of that in which they perceive their oppression, arrive at a consciousness of class; and the white working class must in recovering its class instinct, its sense of oppression, both from technological alienation and a white-oriented culture, arrive at a consciousness of racial oppression.*

For the black man, however, the consciousness of class is instinctive to his consciousness of colour.** Even as he begins to throw away the shackles of his particular slavery, he sees that there are others besides him who are enslaved too. He sees that racism is only one dimension of oppression in a whole system of exploitation and racial discrimination, the particular tool of a whole exploitative creed. He sees also that the culture of competition, individualism and elitism that fostered his intellect and gave it a habitation and a name is an accessory to the exploitation of the masses as a whole, and not merely of the blacks. He understands with Gramsci and George Jackson that 'all men are intellectuals'[25] or with Angela Davis that no-one is. (If the term means anything it is only as a description of the work one does: the intellect is no more superior to the body than the soul to the intellect.) He realizes with Fanon that 'the Negro problem does not resolve into the problem of Negroes living among white men, but rather of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white'.[26] He

*Investigation into this aspect of the problem, however, is the business of white radicals and is not within the purview of this essay.

**He may, of course, become frozen in a narrow cultural nationalism of his own in violent reaction to white culture.

acknowledges at last that inside every black man there is a working-class man waiting to get out.

In the words of Sartre, 'at a blow the subjective, existential, ethnic notion of blackness* passes, as Hegel would say, into the objective, positive, exact notion of the proletariat ... "The white symbolizes capital as the Negro labour ... Beyond the black-skinned men of his race it is the struggle of the world proletariat that he sings".'[27]

And he sings:

I want to be of your race alone
workers peasants of all lands
... white worker in Detroit black peon in Alabama
uncountable nation in capitalist slavery
destiny ranges us shoulder to shoulder
repudiating the ancient malediction of blood taboos
we roll among the ruins of our solitudes
If the flood is a frontier
we will strip the gully of its endless
covering flow
If the Sierra is a frontier
we will smash the jaws of the volcanoes
upholding the Cordilleras
and the plain will be the parade ground of the dawn
where we regroup our forces sundered
by the deceits of our masters
As the contradictions among the features
creates the harmony of the face
we proclaim the oneness of suffering
and the revolt
of all the peoples on all the face of the earth
and we mix the mortar of the age of brotherhood
out of the dust of idols.[28]

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ROBIN COHEN

Michael Imoudu and the Nigerian labour movement

PREFACE

When I met Michael Imoudu eight or nine years ago I was impressed above all by his acute grasp of the 1930's period. The nexus of a world capitalist crisis, a sense of racial solidarity, an anti-colonial struggle and a local attempt to build a workers' movement from a young and weakly organized proletariat — all these formed the core of his political consciousness.

At first, being limited by my poor awareness of the history of other colonial territories before the war, I simply assumed that I was fortunate enough to have met an exceptional individual; but gradually I became aware that Imoudu had a number of counterparts in other colonial and semi-colonial territories. I read about Champion, Kadalie and Nzula in South Africa, Bustamante in Jamaica, Butler in Trinidad, Wallace-Johnson in Sierra Leone, Small in The Gambia, Thuku in Kenya, and Mohammed Ali in Tunisia (whose premature death in a car accident truncated a career which in some respects prefigured that of Fanon).

In investigating this period, certain common contours began to stand out, despite the increasing number of individuals who appeared worthy of consideration. First, nearly all seemed conscious of a common racial identity. If this identity was not always 'black' — it was certainly anti-colonial, as in Ali's case. But in a remarkable number of cases, union leaders had been influenced by the spill of

ROBIN COHEN is senior lecturer in sociology at the University of Birmingham. A French version of this article is to appear in *Les Africains* (Jeune Afrique, forthcoming).

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Garvey's ideas. One would, of course, expect to find a strong residue of Garveyism in the West Indies and the US where the movement originated and flourished. But in South and West Africa too, some apprehension of the notion of 'Ethiopia' was present. Even in so remote a territory as Papua New Guinea, an account of a strike in 1929 by Ian Willis noted that the strikers were influenced by black West Indian and American sailors. (The role of merchant seamen in diffusing both racial and class consciousness is worthy of a study in itself.)[1] Secondly, most of the trade unionists mentioned were in some measure involved with the international communist movement. Several were ultimately to reject decisively any notions of linking their struggles to a trans-continental struggle, but all had in one form or another to confront the issue of whether their local struggle had greater than local implications.

But if the twin influences of black nationalism and international communism were to be the sole defining characteristics, could one not include black trade unionists in the US? In a sense, the black worker in the US was also in a colonial relation, even if the brand of colonialism was 'internal' — A. Phillip Randolph, for instance, organizer of the sleeping car attendants, whose career ranged from early flirtations with communism to his subsequent co-optation into the mainstream of the AFL-CIO. Indeed, Randolph's co-optation suggested another common factor. None of the colonial unionists had succeeded in moving from their popular base into positions of political command. Some, like Randolph and Small, had been co-opted and neutralized. Others, like Imoudu, Wallace-Johnson and Butler, had tried unsuccessfully to launch popular movements or political parties. Yet others had died tragically, Ali in a car accident (a fate that ultimately also befell Wallace-Johnson), Nzula, by then the first black general secretary of the South African Communist Party, coughing tubercular blood on a snow-covered Moscow street. Yet if they were 'failures', they were also very nearly outstanding successes — providing in the thrust of their politics a far more salient challenge to colonialism than the big names (Nkrumah, Zik, Awolowo, Williams, etc.) of the post-1945 period.

What went wrong? No general answers can be provided here. The war itself was a great interruption. Under colonial war-time regulations Butler, Wallace-Johnson and Imoudu were imprisoned or exiled. After 1945 the colonial authorities were ready to offer a neo-colonial solution and the bourgeois nationalists were ready to fulfil their historical role as political compradors. A study of the colonial labour leaders of the 1920s and 1930s shows how misleading are the standard accounts of post-war colonial nationalism. Far from organizing popular dissent, the bourgeois nationalists were containing and emasculating it at an early stage, softening what were *already* high levels of class action manifested on a world-wide level into

nationalist rhetoric that was strident in tone but collaborationist in practice.

In 1930 the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers held a conference in Hamburg. Recently I came across the report of that conference,[2] and it confirmed what I could only speculate on before. Black unionists were conscious of each other's struggle because they met and knew each other or about each other. On the committee which convened the conference were familiar names, like James W. Ford (Trade Union Unity League, USA), George Padmore (whose full role in the organization is far from being told in Hooker's biography), M. Ali (could this be the same Mohammed Ali believed to have been killed in 1928?) and one Johnstone Kenyatta (those were the days when Jomo, now the patrician president of Kenya, had his finger in a number of pies). The delegates included E. Small (Gambia Labour Union) and E. Richards (pseudonym for Wallace-Johnson). Joining these two on the Presidium was Frank Macaulay of Nigeria. Elected as honorary members of the Presidium, as they were 'imprisoned or waiting conviction for activities connected with struggles of Negro toilers', were Albert Nzula (South Africa) and Harry Thuku (Kenya), in addition to two USA nominees. In his opening review to the congress James W. Ford denounced as 'trade union reformist fakers' Kadalie of South Africa (for betraying workers by joining the Amsterdam International) and A.P. Randolph (for selling the sleeping car porters into the Jim-Crow AFL). And these were just the names I recognized! Who were Bile (Cameroun), Rosemond (Haiti), Thibedi (South Africa), Akrong (Gold Coast) and the dozen or more others?

As I read through the reports and speeches of the delegates and their resolutions, it became clear that I had stumbled onto something bigger than I could, or would want to, handle. The sense of internationalism was more profound than anything I could have imagined. The Japanese section of the League Against Imperialism, for example, sent a greeting: 'The Japanese workers and peasants fight as your brothers and sisters in the East, whilst strengthening the unity between colonial and semi-colonial people in Korea, Formosa and China ... From the East, we strongly shake hands with our Negro workers and wish you the best of luck.' The level of analysis of the depression and its consequences for black workers in the metropolis and satellite (to use a more modern vocabulary) is remarkably acute. Finally, Ford's opening address provides the first authoritative account of the origins of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. According to him, at the Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) in Moscow (1928), the 'question of the Negro workers was taken up in some detail'. RILU had already established contact with South African unionists. RILU's initiative was paralleled by another taken at the Sixth Congress of the

Communist International, where it was decided to sponsor a Congress. The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers was then established within RILU. In July 1929 at the 2nd Congress of the League Against Imperialism, Frankfurt, a Provisional Committee decided to convene an international conference. This was to result in the Hamburg conference which Ford was now addressing.

The Report of the Hamburg conference is, on the whole, a document of considerable importance for the understanding of this period. To be sure there are some overblown and rhetorical passages, and some delegates whose credentials and memberships they purported to organize were equally overblown. But only a fuller revision of the document will lay bare its riches — and it is hoped that a future issue of *Race and Class* will carry such a version in its 'Notes and documents' section.

The International Trade Union Committee for Negro Workers itself was subsequently to publish the *Negro Worker* from 1931 to about 1936, initially from Hamburg and later, presumably when the Nazis made that impossible, from Copenhagen. One of the earliest correspondents to the *Negro Worker* was Albert Nzula, who wrote first from South Africa. Later, when he came to Moscow he spent much of his energy writing on African labour problems, sometimes in the pages of the journal, often under the unlikely pseudonym of Tom Jackson. (My own present work is concentrated on tracing Albert Nzula's writings. Fortunately, I have been greatly helped by corresponding with A.B. Davidson, a Moscow historian of South Africa).

But why study this period and these figures? Part of the answer has already been given. It allows us to begin to reinterpret the class character of the nationalist, anti-colonial struggles. Secondly, the period has many similarities with our own. We, too, are aware that over the last ten years black consciousness has spread from Chicago to Brixton, Port of Spain and Soweto. The world capitalist crisis has generated conditions that would be familiar to the delegates attending the Hamburg Conference. Within the metropoles, migrant, immigrant and black workers are the first to be laid off and have the most unemployed within their ranks. Within the satellites, capitalist enterprises spread to the points where labour power is cheapest and most expendable, though this is more under the aegis of US imperialism and multinational corporations than under the protection of British and French colonialism. The salience of 'race' and 'class' are once more posed for the black worker, as is their congruence. Equally, proletarian internationalism may still be a chimera, but the conditions for its existence are more present now than has been the case since the 1930s.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During and immediately after the Second World War Nigeria witnessed several large-scale strikes and demonstrations which reflected the increasing economic strength and political awareness of the proletariat, particularly those working in Lagos. Wage-earners in Nigeria had, in fact, from the late nineteenth century, shown some capacity to defend, maintain or enhance their class interests. The most notable and best-documented event was the strike by 3,000 artisans and labourers in the Public Works Department in 1897.[3] The strike was triggered off by the Governor, Sir Henry McCallum, who, in an attempt to bring about greater economies in the public sector, ordered the reduction of wages and the rearrangement of working conditions. The order was badly timed, for the Governor faced a police mutiny over some other government measures, while numbers of government troops had been sent to the Gold Coast. With the colonial state unable to present a convincing show of force, the strikers resisted Governor McCallum's demands — and were able to halt the wage reductions and rearrange working conditions to their advantage. Despite some potential for linking the strike with other anti-government issues current in Lagos, there is little evidence that the strikers were motivated by anything other than a spontaneous desire to defend their standard of living in the face of the intemperate actions of the Governor.

Other evidence of the growing solidarity of workers before the Second World War can be summarized under three headings: (a) organization, (b) action and (c) consciousness.

(a) Three important unions were organized in this period — the Nigerian Union of Teachers, the Civil Service Union and the Railway Workers' Union, the last being the union that the subject of this study, Michael Imoudu, was to organize and dominate for thirty-five years. Smaller organizations, including at least four other trade unions in the railways and one in the mercantile sector, have also been recorded.[4] It should be noted that these bodies, though often short-lived, were organized *before* 1938, when the Trade Union Ordinance, which provided for the legal registration of trade unions, was passed.

(b) In terms of strike action and other forms of labour unrest before 1939, Hughes and Cohen have documented[5] twenty strikes by employees in the public sector and five in the private sector. In addition, there were three incidents of serious unrest by government workers, one involving the salariat and the other two essentially concerning skilled workers. More often than not, these incidents arose from immediate grievances in the workplace, were rarely effectively organized and were soon settled.

(c) Finally, in terms of consciousness, one may argue that though

the wage-earners of Nigeria were a small group who held simultaneous attachments to ethnic and other primordial sentiments, the work relationship became an increasingly important determinant of the worker's social role. At a very early stage of his involvement in wage labour the worker was able to defend his position and begin to realize a sense of corporate identity.

The degree of class consciousness amongst wage-earners should not be exaggerated. Workers' organizations were only sporadically active over the period, and it was only possible to organize a wide range of workers (across the skills and grades) for a limited tactical end. Nonetheless, it is important not to regard the situation in the early years of the war as a *tabula rasa*. There was a history of workers' protest which survived at the level of folk-memory, and which provided the possibility of galvanizing workers' complaints when the occasion arose.

WORKERS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

When the formal recognition of the right to organize and bargain collectively came into operation at the beginning of the war, workers responded immediately — forty-one unions were registered by the end of 1941. The increased pace of unionization was not, however, solely due to the permissive legislation. Certain underlying structural changes in the economy and society were of greater importance. The war years were marked by a rapid increase in the rate of urbanization (the population of Enugu alone increased by 400 per cent, while the growth of wage- and salary-earners nearly doubled (from 183,000 to 300,000 in 1946).[6] The government itself emphasized the strategic importance of Empire-produced goods — Nigerian tin, coal and vegetable oils were of considerable importance — and this wartime propaganda increased the political awareness of wage-earners. Most importantly, workers had considerable difficulty in maintaining their living standards. The cost of living rose precipitously. In 1941 real wages had fallen to 68 per cent of their 1939 level.[7]

These underlying issues provided the backdrop which aroused the Lagosian workers to direct action. In 1941 and 1942 a number of walk-outs, demonstrations and marches occurred in support of a demand for an increased cost-of-living allowance (COLA). 'COLA' subsequently became the rallying cry for workers in confrontations with the government. Michael Imoudu led the most dramatic march to Governor Bourdillon's residence. For his pains he was banished to a remote part of mid-west Nigeria 'for threatening the peace of the Colony', his exile providing one of the greatest *causes célèbres* of the nationalist struggle. But this anticipates the story. On this occasion, the government, acting also in response to a short-term labour

shortage in Lagos, acceded to the demands of its employees and granted them an increase in wages in 1941. In 1942 it also accepted a recommendation by a government-appointed committee for an increase of 50 per cent in the cost of living allowance.

In the period 1942-5 declining real wages were again in evidence, but to this basic economic grievance others were added of a more specifically political character. First, the workers accused the colonial government of racial discrimination — European civil servants became eligible for special war bonuses, while the allowances of the African government workers remained unchanged. Secondly, there was a widespread feeling that the government had behaved in a high-handed fashion towards its employees. In particular, an order in 1942 under the General Defence Regulations made strikes and lockouts illegal for the duration of the war. This, together with the banishment of Michael Imoudu, was interpreted as a clear attempt to dampen labour militancy, precisely at the moment when it was gaining most strength. Thirdly, most workers claimed that they were *entitled* to an award to cover the rise in the cost of living over the period 1942-5. This claim was based on a speech by Governor Bourdillon in July 1942, when he promised that the awards of that year would be subject to review. The Tudor Davies Commission, which was set up after the 1945 strike (described below), specifically isolated this broken promise as a cause of the strike. The commission pointed out that although the trade unions had demanded in June 1944 that the government promise be honoured, 'the Government made its first constructive attempt to take cognizance of that request in August 1945. In the interval the strike occurred, and the cause of the strike was Government dilatoriness and its lack of sympathy in handling its employees.'[8]

Before describing the events of the 1945 general strike, it is now necessary to examine the background of the principal leader, Michael Imoudu.

IMOUDU'S BACKGROUND[9]

Michael Athokhamien Ominus Imoudu was born in Ora, a small village in mid-west Nigeria, on 15 September 1902. His father was a much-travelled soldier, who had seen service in East Africa. Michael appears to have been an irascible and foot-loose youth, having run away from home on several occasions to broaden his horizons. Although he was brought back to Ora, where his parents died in 1922, he was taken into the home of a relative, who was a linesman on the railways. His relative's occupation involved considerable mobility and Imoudu travelled with his guardian to Benin, Sapele, Warri, Onitsha and other cities in the eastern part of Nigeria. In the course

of his wanderings he learnt the Igbo language fluently, and became converted to Catholicism (he subsequently disavowed any religious leanings). The formal adoption of religious faith provided a means of acquiring an education, schools being dominated at the time by missionary societies. He obtained some education at the Christian Missionary Society school at Sapele and completed his Standard VI level at Warri and Agbor government colleges. Education to this level was, in those days, an avenue for entry into a government department or commercial house, as a junior clerk. But when, in 1928, Imoudu drifted into Lagos, he could not at first find employment and joined the ranks of the jobless for several months. He started work as a linesman in the Posts and Telegraph department, but threw it up in disgust and lived on the odd casual job. In August 1929 he was taken on as an unskilled labourer by the Nigerian Railway Corporation, at the rate of 8d per day (1d an hour). After three years he became an indentured apprentice, with an increment of 1d a year for each of his seven years as an apprentice turner. Halfway through his apprenticeship Imoudu was retrenched, and was out of work for nearly a year before he was re-engaged. In this period he started talking about reorganizing the Railway Workers' Union, and began by drumming up subscriptions from his workmates to provide the union with a more viable economic base. In 1938, Imoudu became a fully-fledged journeyman, earning 3s a day for his labour.

It is said that his political consciousness was first aroused by the arrogant behaviour of a white foreman on the railways. (Indeed, at later points in his career he took a strong stance against the expatriate management of the railways which culminated in a violent demonstration against the British general manager in 1959.) But his period of retrenchment must also have sharpened his sense of injustice. By the outbreak of war Imoudu was known principally as a fiery and committed official of the Railways Workers' Union. As secretary, treasurer, and elected president of the Union, simultaneously, he was able to raise £1,500 in membership dues.

IMOUDU'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE STRIKES OF THE 1940s

The marches of 1941-2 and the strike of 1945 brought Imoudu to national prominence. The events of 1941-2 can be briefly recounted. Two mass meetings of railway workers took place to discuss the demand for an increase in their cost-of-living allowance. On a third occasion, Imoudu led a crowd of angry workers to Government House. There, a meeting with Governor Bourdillon took place where the principal demands of the workers were conceded. An interesting fictional recreation of the meeting was produced in pamphlet form. Called *Imoudu v. Governor: an imaginary conversation*, the theme

was conceived like a medieval passion play: the righteousness of Imoudu confronting the arbitrary and capricious authority of Governor Bourdillon.[10] There seems to be a distinct possibility that this pamphlet was produced directly under Imoudu's inspiration: the unusual form the tract takes may have meant that Imoudu was not anxious to have another brush with the authorities.

Though the government was prepared to grant an increase in COLA, Imoudu was clearly seen as a trouble-maker — one whose political influence had to be curbed, lest the industrial action his efforts generated should threaten the war effort. Such action against militant union leaders was undertaken in other British colonies — I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson of Sierra Leone was imprisoned, as was Uriah Butler, the leader of the pitch workers in Trinidad. For Imoudu, who had committed no legal offence, the punishment was less severe — exile under the Emergency Regulations to a village called Auchi in mid-west Nigeria.

A local pamphlet biography, written by Imoudu's kinsman and ward, described in somewhat exaggerated terms his conditions of exile:

> The Hero [Imoudu] became emaciated with pangs of hunger, thirst, cold, filth and squalor. His toes, fingers ... stiff limbs, were pinched with intense cold ... [The] refuge at Auchi has taken away the better part of our Hero and leaving the Hero only a mere and bare form of subsistence for the existence of life.[11]

While Imoudu was in exile, further pressures for a post-war wage settlement were building up in Lagos. These pressures were fuelled by the aura of martyrdom that Imoudu's banishment fostered, and by the provocative statements of the colonial government. The unions had gradually organized bodies which federated the interests of individual unions. The first such body was the African Civil Servants' Technical Workers' Union (ACSTWU), formed in 1941. Imoudu held office in this body, despite the fact that it was dominated by rather more conservative leaders organizing the government salariat. In 1943 the first Trade Union Congress was formed, but it was not this body but the older ACSTWU which co-ordinated action in support of a general strike. When the ACSTWU wrote to the government complaining that the control of prices was inadequate, that rents had quadrupled and that the government cost-of-living figures was 'a mysterious jumble of metaphysical figures', the Acting Chief Secretary replied (six weeks later) in terms not unlike those of Marie Antoinette:

> Unless the public is willing to do without or reduce their consumption of commodities which are scarce, or to substitute other commodities for them ... no benefit will result from increasing COLA.[12]

In the long round of correspondence between the trade unions and the government, the question of Imoudu's release from detention was raised. Here the government committed a grave political miscalculation. The Acting Governor, Whitely, decided that Imoudu's release would remove the sting from the workers' demands. Imoudu returned to Lagos, only to be feted by the Lagosian crowds, and in time to play a leading role in the general strike.

The account of his reception by P.I. Omo-Ananigie captures the atmosphere of the times. Imoudu was led through the bustling streets of Lagos astride a white horse. According to Omo-Ananigie's account:

> There was indeed an outburst of enthusiastic cheering of all kinds of people irrespective of political affiliation, different walks of life or calling, status, creed, or religion. The streets ... were packed full of cosmopolitan crowds of sight-seers and merry-makers, including schoolboys, ex-soldiers, Market Guildswomen, all wage earners, Pensioners, money-lenders, Omolanke men [hand-cart pushers], brickmakers, including independent artists, artistes, artisans, book-binders, printers, carpenters ... All mustered strong to see and welcome the deported, exiled, banished, detained and restricted Hero ... The crowds were about 100,000 strong. These were acclaiming the Hero as Labour Leader No.1.[13]

The effect of the government's action had been to transform Imoudu into a popular hero. His mass support also assured for him a favoured place in the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), the leading nationalist party of the time. Azikiwe, the leader of the NCNC, used his daily newspapers, the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Comet* to celebrate the release of Imoudu and to back the more radical demands of the strikers. The support of Imoudu by the NCNC reflected the uncertainty of the nationalist leadership as to what tactics would be necessary to displace the colonial power. Violence was not finally ruled out as a possible tactic until 1948, and this made it all the more necessary for Azikiwe to maintain contacts with Imoudu, who had a sizeable following among the masses. Although the strike gained the support of other nationalists, like Awolowo and Herbert Macaulay, some of the politicians were frightened of too close an association with the 'hotheads' in the unions. The Nigerian Youth Movement, predominantly led by elitist Yoruba Lagosians, with whom Azikiwe had broken in 1941, consistently argued for a moderate line. Their paper, the *Daily Service*, was conspicuous in omitting any reference to Imoudu's role in the strike.

The course of the strike was as follows. On 21 and 22 June 1945 many government workers in Lagos came out. The ACSTWU (with twenty-two unions representing 90,000 workers), although led by a

moderate president, T.A. Bankole, had been pressed into formulating the first set of demands. These included a minimum daily wage of 2s and a 50 per cent increase in COLA. An attempt by the moderate leadership to postpone the strike for fourteen days, to await a further response from the government, was decisively repudiated at two mass meetings on 21 June. At one of these meetings T.A. Bankole, who argued for patience, fell victim to Imoudu's frequently repeated tactic of appealing to the rank-and-file above the heads of the established leadership. In his own words, T.A. Bankole recalled the situation:

> Without allowing some moments for reflection, Mr. Imoudu, apparently bewildered by the prevailing quiet, overtook me on the rostrum and with a stentorian voice, counteracted the effect of my reasoned appeal in the following terms. 'I am President and owner of the Railway Workers' Union throughout Nigeria, and I am going to speak for you. Am I not going to speak for you? (shouts of "yes", "yes"). Negotiation has failed. We are going on strike ...' After re-echoing the last sentence of Mr. Imoudu's declaration, the men sprang frantically on their feet and staring at me shouted thief, thief, you have been bribed: the government has bribed you.[14]

The attempts by the moderates to halt the course of the strike failed lamentably. It appeared, nonetheless, that once they were conscious of their error in releasing Imoudu, the colonial authorities determined on a hard line. They threatened the strikers with a forfeit of wages, attempted to run a skeleton railway service with the aid of management and prison labour from Port Harcourt, took on 900 blackleg labourers, ordered the arrest of nine leaders suspected of being responsible for the derailment of a train and, finally, banned the NCNC papers (the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Comet*). Azikiwe's newspapers had played a great part in creating and validating Imoudu's position and had consistently supported the most radical stance by the strikers. The *Pilot* in particular had carried a series of articles on the trials and tribulations of Imoudu in exile.

Though the strike was not entirely solid, and was confined to the south of the country, most of the workers concerned had stayed out for thirty-seven days and many had stayed out for forty-four. In terms of the numbers involved it was the biggest strike that Nigeria had ever seen, and was only to be exceeded nearly twenty years later with the general strike of 1964. The stoppage involved (according to an official source) only 32,600 on any one day, but, as James Coleman points out, 'It was not the number of strikers that made the work stoppage significant, but the fact that most of them were performing services indispensable to the economic and administrative life of the country.'[15]

The strikers won a significant victory in that they only returned to

work once the government conceded to their demands — that there should be no victimization, that legal proceedings against arrested strike leaders should be withdrawn, that the ban on the *Pilot* and *Daily Comet* should be lifted and that an impartial commission should be set up to consider their grievances. This commission was to grant to workers a large increase in wages. There is no doubt that Imoudu played a central role in achieving this victory. His return to Lagos from exile dramatized the anti-colonial aspects of the strike, while his political tactics of constant confrontations with the authorities gave to workers a sense of morale and purpose. Imoudu also became an important figure in the nationalist movement. He was co-opted on to the executive of the NCNC in 1945 and toured the countryside, with other NCNC delegates, in April 1946, trying to drum up support for the nationalist cause in areas outside the southern cities of Nigeria. The general strike indeed served, in James Coleman's judgement, 'as a dramatic opening to a new nationalist era'.[16] It is a matter of historical record that the link between the radical section of the labour movement, led by Imoudu, and the NCNC was to survive only for a short time. It coalesced again in 1949 with the shooting of a number of striking coal miners, but gradually, from the early 1950s onwards, the link weakened. This was the period of decolonization when the colonial government was able to use successfully the attraction of political office to woo the NCNC on to the path of constitutional activity and away from the policy of confrontation and anti-colonial agitation.

The strike had at least raised the possibility of co-operation between the unions and the more populist-inclined politicians, a possibility that was to re-emerge after political independence was granted in 1960, and which still remains on the agenda today, despite a decade of military rule. The strike also demonstrated that, given the fusion of a basic economic injustice with a galvanizing political issue, the unions could bring considerable pressure to bear on the central political authority. In this respect it is instructive to cite the remarks of the Tudor Davies Commission, set up as a consequence of the strikers' demands:

> It is apparent that the influence and power of the Nigerian Trade Unions for good or ill should not be underestimated, for if their organisational strength — financial and numerical — is small, what may be termed their operational strength, is great.[17]

IMOUDU'S ROLE AFTER THE 1945 STRIKE

There is no doubt that in the settlement of the strike and in the presentation of evidence before the Tudor Davies Commission, the

moderate — predominantly white-collar — unions recovered some of their prestige, at the expense of Imoudu and the radical section of the labour movement. This was to some degree to be expected. Imoudu's greatest qualities lay in the leadership he provided during moments of crisis: on the streets, at mass meetings and at the head of marching columns of workers. When it came to the matter of detailed arguments about cost-of-living indices and bargaining round a table, the arguments of the conservative leaders, who were ready to compromise and negotiate, carried more weight. The Commission in fact gave their ears principally to a hastily patched together group of unions, led by the moderates whom they described as 'sufficiently rational and sufficiently responsible to voice the opinions of Nigerian Labour as a whole'.[18] There is little doubt that this was a veiled derogatory reference to Imoudu and the section of the labour movement whose support he commanded.

Imoudu was to be an active figure in Nigerian trade union history for many years afterwards — indeed until 1972 when he retired to his home town in Ora having accepted the title of Honorary Life President of his old union, the Railway Workers' Union. But throughout the period of his involvement in trade union affairs, the pattern set by the 1945 events provided the *leitmotif* of his own political interventions and the responses of his trade union colleagues. Imoudu was always the headstrong, militant, unrepentant leader who prided himself on his connections with the rank and file and on his public display of a proletarian life-style. Many of his fellow trade union leaders were, by contrast, of petit-bourgeois origin or occupation and often became opportunistic or bureaucratic unionists.

This pattern was seen particularly in the attempts to form a united centralized trade union body of the character of the French Confédération Genérale du Travail, or the British Trade Union Congress. The history of the Nigerian trade union movement has, in this respect been a long and convoluted one, and it has been recounted in detail elsewhere.[19] Suffice it to say that since the creation of the first central trade union body in 1943, there have been some twenty-seven centres or federations established, six substantive — but unsuccessful — attempts to create a unified single body and many more occasions where walkouts or splinter groups have frustrated moves towards unity. On virtually every occasion when the moves towards unity have threatened what Imoudu has seen as the objective interests of Nigerian workers, he has led a splinter group to perpetuate the political tendency that he represents.

The position that he held to in trade union affairs involved three central issues. First, once the disassociation with the NCNC had become a reality, Imoudu became extremely suspicious of any association with bourgeois-led political parties. Though he toyed on

two or three occasions with organizing or standing on the platform of a workers-led political party, on the whole he remained contemptuous of electoral politics. He saw the workers' best interests as lying in the fostering of a strong and militant trade union movement. Secondly, he was hostile, on nationalistic grounds, to the association of Nigerian trade unions with international federations — such as the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, the World Federation of Trade Unions or the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Imoudu observed with scorn and bitterness how other Nigerian trade union leaders accepted gifts, scholarships and funding from such bodies, and often referred to his colleagues as being 'bought' by them. Imoudu did travel briefly to Moscow in 1960, but he thereafter had little to do with his sponsors, the WFTU. Thirdly, Imoudu was opposed to attempts by employers and the government to co-opt workers into profit-sharing schemes and allow them seats on planning or arbitration and conciliation bodies. His view of the class struggle continued to be fundamentalist and irreconcilable.

Such a political position led Imoudu to come into conflict not only with the moderate section of the labour movement, but with his fellow-radicals, who at various periods have sponsored a marxist-leninist party (the Socialist Workers' and Farmers' Party) and have affiliated their own unions to the World Federation of Trade Unions. As an example of this one might cite the case of Wahab Goodluck, who, after joining Imoudu in setting up a radical central body in 1962, denounced him later as being 'too undisciplined to work with'.[20] For many years Imoudu had a somewhat ambivalent position in the trade union movement. He continued to be strongly involved with the affairs of the Railway Workers' Union and was always held in high regard by many rank-and-file workers. He was, however, much disliked by several of his fellow trade union leaders who saw in his individualistic streak a counter which thwarted their own attempts at building a unified body of organized support, on the left or right.

The general strike of 1964 provided Imoudu with one last occasion for an expression his abilities in mass leadership. There is no doubt that the events of 1945 had furnished the basic *metier* for his style of leadership, and that his position as 'Labour Leader No.1' had been exemplified and cemented on that occasion. The 1964 strike allowed him, now a vigorous 62-year-old, to take one final bow and to deliver an epilogue to his long career in the trade union movement. In essence the 1964 strike represented an outburst of outrage and anger at the depredations of the independence leadership. The wage demands of the workers were treated with contempt by the new political leadership who, for the most part, simply asserted that wages had to be held down in the interests of 'development'. As such

a position was being accompanied by regular revelations concerning the corruption of many of Nigeria's leading politicians, it is hardly surprising that the wage-earners were not convinced of the legitimacy of the government's claims. They came out in a mass strike in June 1964, the most dramatic event being a march across the Carter Bridge (linking Lagos to the mainland) where strikers were opposed by the police, with army units in reserve. Imoudu, like a famous prize fighter of the past, linked arms with the other trade union leaders, and, so he proudly told me, 'led the workers from the front'. On this occasion he donned a Russian fur cap and a red track suit, which he described as his 'fighting kit'. As in 1945, the workers suddenly confronted the government, this time led by African politicians, with a degree of solidarity which surprised many observers at the time. In the settlement that followed, the workers won substantial increases in wages and improved their conditions of service — but the central union bodies, as they had done on the previous occasion, once more lapsed into their warring factions once the dust of the strike had settled. For Imoudu this was his last glorious moment, a swan song, which for many workers was redolent of his first famous confrontations with the colonial authorities.

IMOUDU'S IDEAS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Because Imoudu was in essence a populist leader who drew his inspiration from the rank-and-file workers and from a response to an immediate situation of crisis, his political ideology remained very much at the level of spontaneity. He was not a reflective man, but liked to exaggerate how simple a man he was. He often used the symbols of tradition to reinforce his common appeal. One author records an incident when he addressed a workers' meeting in the garb of a juju priest, while brandishing a horse-tail fan.[21] He sometimes pretended to be semi-literate, whereas I have several letters in my possession from Imoudu showing a clear command of the English language.

Nonetheless, it is true that he wrote little for publication, and what he did write, while being polemical and scathing, was not always very revealing. In July 1965 he published a pamphlet, *Programme for the Unification of One Central Labour Organisation*, in which he set out some of his ideas for a revived Joint Action Committee, the body that successfully led the 1964 strike and that subsequently disintegrated into its constituent units. In this pamphlet he caustically noted that:

> to many trade unionists, ideology is more of a commodity than anything else. What interests the workers, tends to be brushed aside and the workers are kept behind while the 'ideological

> struggles' of labour leaders one against the other, appears to take the place of workers' struggle for their economic betterment. I am forced to ask myself, whether we leaders are leading ourselves or the workers.[22]

He also listed what he regarded as the sources of labour disunity in the past. These he thought were: '1. Material interests, 2. Quarrel over unions like women over men or men over women, 3. Treachery and betrayal, 4. Embezzlement, 5. Fight for leadership, 6. Government recognition, 7. International relations and 8. The question of ideology.'[23] Though Imoudu could no doubt himself be indicted on some of these charges, they did represent an effective portrayal of the malaise of the Nigerian labour movement.

In the same pamphlet he also published an open letter to Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, who was to be killed six months later in the military coup of January 1966.

> At the moment, nobody knows what type of government we are now following. The idea of our political leaders is a mixture of Feudalism, Capitalism, Socialism and Tribalism and this puts the whole country in a mock, mess and confusion. Some political leaders suggested Democratic, Pragmatic and Fabian Government. We all know that these suggested names have been obliterated from the globe, and yet some Nigerian leaders are still parading these dead names.[24]

While Imoudu showed himself to be an effective lampooner of the pretensions of the independence leadership, he was less able to construct a convincing strategic and ideological programme of his own. In his letter to Tafawa Balewa he demanded a constitutional conference to 'build a real national state' and construct 'a clearly defined social system', but the contours of his own plans for a new Nigeria always remained at an unspecified and vague level.

Where he did demonstrate considerable political adroitness was at the tactical level — appealing for public support for the cause of the working class. One of the most fascinating documents in this respect is a letter written in Yoruba in May 1941, at the beginning of his public career, to the market women of Lagos.[25] The letter is long and carefully drafted, using idiomatic expressions and adages to appeal to the women traders. What Imoudu clearly wanted was an extension of credit to workers (in the absence of any substantial strike funds, this was essential if the strikers were to stay out for any length of time) and a degree of political support from this relatively powerful economic group. He begins the letter to 'Our Dear Mothers' by quoting the Yoruba proverb, 'Whatever affects the eye will also affect the nose'. This was designed to stress the familial links the market women had with 'senior or junior brother, husbands, fathers

and especially children' working on the railways. He goes on to describe how difficult it was to extract higher wages from the 'European masters' and asked the traders to remember the proverb that 'to extract the palm kernel from the palm nut is not an easy task'.

> We are [the letter continues] merely workers under the Europeans. We shall not tolerate any cheating this time ... There is no language which the Europeans understand more clearly than that the workers should go on strike. We know the implication of this for the people throughout Nigeria ... We have decided, our mothers, that we must not relent in our efforts ... It is your co-operation that we seek in this matter ... so that our boss will know that we workers did not descend from heaven, nor did our people in the markets and the town. Our downfall at work is your downfall too. Whatever affects the eye will also affect the nose, in fact, you, our mothers. God help all of us.

Though stylistically constructed round the repetition of traditional sayings, the purpose of the communication is what marxists would immediately recognize as an attempt to forge a class alliance with a group whose interests were in harmony with those of the workers. Imoudu was a man whose origins, character and simple life-style allowed him to empathize with the common people. He drew his inspiration from them and they, not the colonial government, accorded him leadership and recognition. He was certainly a 'man of the people' in a sense that few Nigerian politicians have been, before or since. He lent expression to the as yet inchoate and uncrystallized consciousness of the workers of his country whom he helped to defend and whose interest he sought to represent throughout his life. He performed a mediating role for workers of many different ethnic origins trying to come to terms with the highly exploitative relationships characteristic of a newly-born capitalist society. While his role is ignored by established scholars in the universities of his own country, it is perhaps enough that it will live on in the folk-memories of Nigerian workers. For Imoudu, there could be no greater recognition.

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CYNTHIA COCKBURN

The local state: management of cities and people*

INTRODUCTION

This article is about the state and the working-class of inner city areas. It concentrates on the local aspects of the state, rather than the state at national level; it is about working-class interests 'in the community', rather than at the workplace, and it deals with the neglected sphere of capitalist reproduction, rather than capitalist production.

The term 'local state' calls for some explanation. To use it is not to imply that there is some distinct entity separate from the state as a whole, or that the state locally resides in any one body. Broadly speaking, the local state is both the local presence of the national state agencies, such as the police and the courts, and those functions, such as housing and education, that are defined as local responsibilities. I am mainly concerned here with the latter, the services typically administered by local councils, though within parameters defined by the state centrally.

The last decade has seen changes of two distinct kinds in the way policy for these services is made and administered. These changes can be summarized as *corporate management* and the *community approach*. A further look at the development of these aspects of urban management reveals a close affinity between the two.

There was a time when capitalism seemed able to respond to the increasing demands of the working class for housing, health, pensions, a decent environment. Early in the 1960s there was a mood of optimism; though there was bound to be a painful lag, poverty within capitalism could eventually be eradicated. Levels of state

CYNTHIA COCKBURN, previously a researcher with the Centre for Environmental Studies, is now a member of Union Place, a community printing collective in South London.

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spending were increasing rapidly. Towards the end of the 1960s, however, it became clear that poverty stubbornly survived — and that public indebtedness could not go on for ever uncurbed. Problems might still be resolved, though, by means of more intelligent *management*, by tighter budgeting, by learning how to plan and to put plans into effect. The central state urged local authorities to adopt corporate management.

By the 1970s, however, the contradiction that had always existed, the gap between the promises of prosperity and the ability of capitalism to deliver the goods, had widened beyond credibility. Those caught in the poverty of the inner cities became more disorderly, even more militant. The state was forced to extend outwards its management concerns. To the preoccupation with budgets and plans was added another: managing people and their relations to authority. Offers of 'participation' were made to render more acceptable the actions of the state. Community work was interposed to meet and manage the spontaneous expressions of popular unrest. But these very measures also made the local state vulnerable to working-class militancy...

NEW WAYS IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

To return to the beginning. The practice of corporate management was devised in large American firms and state departments in the late 1950s. It crossed the Atlantic and grounded on British shores in the early 1960s, ferried by management consultants such as McKinsey Inc., operating among the big enterprises of both the USA and Britain.

What exactly was corporate management? In governing a complex system such as a multi-operation company, the manager uses 'hard' aids, such as the electronic computer, and also discrete techniques, ranging from one-job-at-a-time work study to comprehensive operations research. Many such techniques were developed and applied in the 1950s and 60s. Corporate management, though, is more than the sum of these management tools. It is called by its exponents 'a marriage of management and science'. It looks at the system as a whole, its goals, strategies and growth. It has regard to the pattern of relationships within an organization to ensure efficient flows of information; to defining channels of responsibility and accountability (for whom you answer and to whom), and to the design of decision-processes so that different types of decision are taken at appropriate levels and in appropriate sequences.[1]

Two trends in British capital go some way to explain why an increasing number of businesses took on board corporate management and planning in this period. The first is the striking

concentration that was occurring in manufacturing industry, as big firms bought up small, or arranged mergers with other sizeable companies.[2] The scale and complexity of the giant firms that result from such a process demand systems-management of a far more advanced kind than is needed by small-scale competitive companies. As the firm grows, the different factors a manager has to hold in his head and use in decision-making grow in number too, and their inter-relationships grow geometrically. Without new styles of management his control is threatened. Corporate management is the way of life of the decision-makers in the international monopolies.[3]

The shift to the new ways of managing is not always or only provoked by a growth-crisis, however. Firms can be threatened by loss of profitability. A concurrent economic trend in Britain in the 1960s was a steady decline in levels of profitability in many industries, in spite of overall growth in the gross national product. It has been suggested that this profit squeeze was brought about by a pincer movement of foreign competition and loss of imperial advantages on the one hand, and worker pressure on wages on the other.[4] In the 1960s the British working class began to test its new strength, fortified by relatively full employment, a shortage of skilled labour in some industries and areas and more adequate social security — factors which militated against discipline at work and made labour unpredictability a growing problem to managements.

Certainly the government, responsible for the health of the national economy, had an interest in beefing up British management to increase international competitiveness. In 1965, long after Harvard and MIT, the London and Manchester Business Schools were founded. Courses in other universities quickly followed. A corpus of academic management science grew to meet the demand. The trainee manager at college learned corporate planning. He learned how to specify the company's objectives and goals; how to select policies and programmes to achieve them; how to determine the type and amount of resources required, and how these could be obtained and allocated to different activities. He learned how to design and operate within sophisticated management systems affording sensitive controls, procedures for anticipating or correcting errors or failures in the corporation's plans. In the use of systems theory and cybernetics the firm has an analogue in the brain and the nervous system. The ultimate aim was to achieve controls in the firm as subtle and adaptive as those of the human body.[5]

MANAGEMENT REFORM REACHES THE TOWN HALL

This was the school of thought that was also, indirectly, tutoring British local government. Take the London Borough of Lambeth as an

instance — it is not dissimilar in this aspect of its history from many urban authorities. The management revolution in Lambeth was begun by the Tory majority that came to power in the 1968 elections. The council chamber had been dominated for thirty years by the Labour Party. When the Tories entered the town hall as its political leadership the morning after the election, no less surprised by the size of their majority than Labour by the scale of its defeat, they took on a council that was already a big business, with an annual turnover running into many millions. To it they brought a natural inclination for efficiency and tight purse strings.

Three years later, when the Conservatives ceded their place to Labour once again, the balance of authority and the nature of council decision-making had changed quite strikingly. What had existed as a loose assembly of council committees and a multiplicity of small departments, their work barely coordinated, had become a tightly-knit hierarchy under the control of a board of powerful directors, in close partnership with a top-level caucus of majority party members. The town clerk had gone and in his place was a chief executive, the corporate manager in person. He had himself designed and now presided over the new management structure. An annual cycle of conscious, analytical, forward planning had been set in motion.

The senior officers feared that the returning Labour group would reverse this new management set-up. But the Labour Party too had changed. The incoming Labour leader of 1971 was an economics teacher. Many of his colleagues, whose average age was undoubtedly the youngest ever known in this council, were not manual workers but professional and managerial people to whom the new ways came naturally. The Labour group took on and developed the management structure left by the Tories. They adopted the 'cabinet system', the one-party top-level Policy Committee. A sub-committee of this was soon given the task of overviewing corporate planning, and the corporate planning unit, with its new type of professional officer, was strengthened. A five-year rolling corporate plan in 7 volumes was published annually.

The corporate management and planning system in Lambeth, as elsewhere, was thus the product of *both* political parties and the local bureaucracy. More importantly, however, it was prompted by central government which, as we shall see, had an interest in gearing up the local organizations of the state for more effective governance. A succession of official studies and reports appeared in the 1960s, mainly under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, later the Department of the Environment. The Maud Report on the internal management of local authorities[6] and the Mallaby Report on staffing and personnel management[7] were published in 1967. Local government as a whole, through the Local Government Act of 1972, was completely restructured into a

consistent two-tier system of county and district authorities larger than before. This reorganization reflected similar principles to those of Maud and Mallaby and of the management consultants, who were finding a growing market in national and local state bodies. Indeed, the external reform was *occasioned* by a need for stronger management. Stronger wine calls for new bottles. The Bains Report, the Patterson Report and others followed,[8] recommending corporate decision-making systems for the new local councils, water and health authorities.

REPRODUCING CAPITALISM

Why was corporate management needed within the local councils, especially city councils, at this time? It was not just because the know-how was to hand, though without it the developments would have been impossible. There were more specific reasons, but to see them we need an analysis of local government that sets it in the context of the real economic situation of the period in which we live, and asks: what is its job?

The primary role of the state as a whole in capitalist society is continually to ensure the conditions within which capital accumulation can take place. On behalf of capital it attempts to control the economy and its business cycles — deflating, reflating and so forth. It even aids production indirectly by providing cheap utilities (power, communications, etc.) that help national industry to compete with foreign capital. The state's intervention in capitalist production is indeed becoming more and more direct, including aid to individual firms.

The state has, however, a parallel function, one that is seldom formulated: that of contributing to capitalist reproduction. Capitalist societies must have a mechanism for reproducing themselves.[9] Apart from renewing capital, buildings, machinery and raw materials, the labour force must also be reproduced from one generation to the next. This process goes on mainly outside the work place. It occurs on the whole by giving people wages so that they can do it for themselves, within the family and the community. With their wages they buy their own food and housing and a bus ticket to work. But the renewal of labour power, the housing, education and orientation of workers and their dependants, is a task that outstrips the resources of the family or of the individual employer. The state therefore takes steps, on behalf of the capitalist class as a whole, to assist in the job of reproduction: to plan for and provide training, shelter, health and social services for the country at large. Much of this provision is administered by the *local* state bodies. In this way the welfare state has to be seen in two ways simultaneously. It represents services that

are necessary to the working class and have been won by years of struggle. It also represents the 'servicing' of the labour force in the interests of capital.

A second aspect of capitalist reproduction in which the state, local no less than central, is involved is in reproducing capitalist *relations*. It is sometimes forgotten that the respective positions of landlord and tenant, the observance of electoral democracy, the individual's client-relationship to the state are just as much capitalist relations as those between employer and employed. The state assists in their maintenance and development by means of culture and ideology — but also, in the last resort, by force.

There is a practical partnership in capitalist reproduction between the family and the state — in particular local housing authorities, education authorities and health authorities. In these it is the practice wherever possible to relate to families rather than individuals, and within the family they often deal with woman, wife and mother. In some respects they complement, even supervise, her domestic work. This, as we shall see, opens up a new perspective on class struggle.

HIGH STATE SPENDING, GROWING MILITANCY

There has been a great expansion of the kind of responsibilities the local state undertakes in the name of reproduction, and it has been reflected in a continuous and massive growth in state expenditure. Local authority expenditure in particular makes panic headlines: it rose from about £1,500 million in 1954 to nearly £13,000 million in 1974, approximately doubling as a proportion of gross domestic product in twenty years.[10] The on-going struggle of the working class has exacted greater and greater spending on 'the social wage'; but also, as technology advanced, capital required a more highly specialized and trained work force. The fastest growing sector of state expenditure in the period before the major 'cuts' of 1975 was in health, housing, social welfare, social security and education.

For all this rocketing state expenditure, however, parts of the urban population continued to suffer unemployment, homelessness and low incomes: in short, poverty. The rediscovery of poverty in the late 1960s was alarming to the state authorities. It coincided with a recognition of over-spending. Continued deficit financing of public services was incompatible with a healthy economy. Greater impact on poverty was needed without extra spending. The answer could only be *tighter management of resources*. Growing urban problems and growing urban management costs were thus the reason for the experiments in corporate management which the local state entered into from the mid-60s onwards.

Thus, by 1974 an authority such as Lambeth Council, with six years of corporate management to its credit, should by all accounts have been deftly despatching the poverty dragon with one hand while reining back the charger of public spending with the other. But Lambeth, like other authorities, was finding that the new management inside the council was no match for trends whose causes lay mainly outside. What happened, in fact, during these six years was that the council's expenditure rose in real terms by 50 per cent in six years. Worse, the borough's indebtedness had trebled. Servicing this debt alone cost the borough nearly £10 million in 1973-4.

And what happened to the local working class? Unemployment had trebled. The housing waiting list had lengthened by 33 per cent. The outward shift of manufacturing capital and the adventures of property capital, the prime movers in the city, had exacerbated social and economic problems. In this they had, as it happened, been encouraged by official plans. In the early 1970s the local state in Lambeth, in spite of its management efforts, was in the position of having to service a population in need of high levels of spending in a situation of tighter and tighter money. This was one horn of its dilemma. The other was that it faced the growing militancy of a working class whose interests in the borough's life were in direct conflict with those of capital, but who addressed their anger mainly at the council. Local people were continually threatening to evade the proper relation to authority. Besides, the condition of the poor was a scandal that embarrassed local government.

WORKING-CLASS EXPERIENCE

We ought to look for a moment at the life lived by people in Lambeth — especially in the north of the borough which suffered all the indices of 'multiple deprivation' that characterize the inner areas of London, Liverpool, Coventry and other cities. It should be remembered that many of the working class in such areas are black. For them racism is yet another turn of the screw.

If the council were caught up in contradictions, no less were ordinary people. The contradictions they experienced go some way to explain their animosity and the confused ways they found of expressing it. For example, people wanted jobs; they would travel long distances to find one and would accept something far below their real level of skill just to be in waged work. Yet once in work they suffered hard conditions and low pay. In housing, the best that many people could dream of, more than they could hope for, was a council flat. Yet those who were lucky enough to be in council flats found that the standard of accommodation and maintenance on many estates was appalling. Many tenants in formerly private houses

bought up by the council found that the council was as dilatory over repairs and improvements as their old landlords had been. Besides, once in council tenure they were subject to officious control, to rules and regulations that often left them with less freedom than they had had before. The contradictions existed in other aspects of their lives too. People needed the advice of a social worker as to how to get the best out of a complicated welfare system; yet they felt obscurely that the access a social worker had to their home put them under some kind of supervision. Many people were afraid of growing violence in the borough; they wanted the protection afforded by the police. Yet all too often it was their own daughters who were in court for petty theft, and their own sons who were done for 'sus'. Finally, they needed each other's support and mutual care; yet the family, used and exploited by both capitalism and the state, was, especially for women and children, often an oppressive situation.

As a result of the daily experiences of this kind, the working class was exerting pressure on the state in three ways. First, people represented a problem to urban management simply by existing, by being homeless, by being on social security, by having children. Secondly, people were reacting in individual and apparently unpolitical ways. The increasing incidence of truancy, vandalism, petty theft and mugging weighed heavily on the nerves of parents, fearful of the outcome for their children. But nonetheless, it represented a way in which the state was picking up a problem of control that in other circumstances would have remained that of the family. In both these ways, by failing to support and to control its members, the family was defaulting in its share of capitalist reproduction. The failure was in the main quite inadvertent and to the cost of the people themselves. Thirdly, however, a minority were *acting* in a collective and organized way in support of their interests. The political expression of frustration took the form of a direct attack by street groups, tenant groups, squatting groups and other organizations on the council's authority. Though the Director of Housing and the Director of Development were singled out as bogeymen, the dislike was not only for the bureaucracy but for the elected members too. 'Housing chairman arrogant at meeting', read the headline in a local news-sheet.

> The councillor's indifference to people's problems was apparent throughout the meeting. He seemed to think that even if he was elected by the people of this ward they should solve their own problems and not bother him. He didn't seem to realise that HE is one of our problems.

Where was confidence in the vote, the representative system, the 'party of the working class'? Instead of queueing in an orderly way for councillor's surgery sessions, instead of wording moderate

petitions to be lodged in the fullness of time on the council agenda, local groups were shouting, pasting up disrespectful posters and insulting Labour councillors. There was more militancy outside the workplace than had ever been experienced before. A head-on conflict between the working class and the bureaucracy, mainly over housing, was outstripping the power of the Labour Party to mediate or to control. It was a story that many in other cities would have recognized.

Such a critical situation out in the streets and homes of Lambeth and other inner city areas in Britain made corporate management, within the town hall, preoccupied as it was with balancing the books, investigating the productivity of its typists and making sophisticated long-range projections of its inability to house the population, seem a less than adequate reform of urban management. For all its promise of tougher control of resources, more penetrating analysis of social and economic problems and coordinated policies to solve them, the new corporate management system of the council was failing to stop the yearly deterioration in local people's circumstances. Worse, it was if anything exacerbating popular disrespect for the authority of the council. By concentrating power visibly in the hands of senior officers, and to some extent of senior elected members, it was dramatizing the impotence of the ordinary working-class ward councillor. By drawing Tory and Labour policies closer, on shared management criteria, it was making elections seem pointless.

Corporate management was not, however, the only string to the local state's bow. The other was *community development*.

THE COMMUNITY PACKAGE

From 1971 onwards the council in Lambeth increasingly adopted a more outgoing approach to the local population. It invited 'participation' in some of its physical planning procedures (indeed this was now required by legislation); it assisted a community relations committee; it funded community projects; it appointed eight community workers to its Social Services Directorate; and, by far the biggest effort in this direction, it sponsored a system of neighbourhood councils backed up by a headquarters office in the town hall and a sub-committee of council. There were eight such mini-councils at the outset, many more were envisaged in the rose-tinted early days of the experiment.

These were by no means maverick initiatives by Lambeth. Many other councils were doing the same. Central government was promoting the community approach to the problem of poverty through several different departments. The Home Office sponsored the neighbourhood schemes; its urban programme offered grants in

support of community initiatives and set up a national community development project. The Department of Education and Science responded to the Plowden Report by setting up educational priority areas, promoting the idea of the 'community school' in poor working-class areas. The Department of the Environment embarked on the 'total approach' (a very corporate idea) with its inner area studies and management guidelines studies of select local areas. Later, it explicitly linked corporate management and community development in the area management trials. The Department of Health and Social Security, responsible for the Seebohm reforms of the social services, recommended a community context to social work. The philosophy and technique of community work was rapidly developed between 1963 and 1973 by study groups sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation,[11] work that was soon taken up by a new semi-professional body, the Association of Community Workers. Local authorities were being exhorted, cajoled and led by central government and by nation-wide interests.

The originating documents of all these initiatives show, behind the rhetoric of poverty, a concern with saving money by harnessing community resources; easing the implementation of plans by engaging the support of local groups; obtaining information about working-class experience and attitudes, and supplementing the blocked routes of electoral democracy with new circuits. The most intelligent analyses accepted and used conflict in the search for stability ... and urged the councillor forward. 'It is the politician's task to manage conflict, not to eliminate it.'[12]

THE OUTWARD REACH OF MANAGEMENT

Local government managers are not alone, as is often supposed, in having a population and an environment, an 'out there' to administer. Big firms too, though they do not have the state's statutory responsibility to govern the people, nonetheless have clearcut interests in influencing the way people behave. The monopoly enterprise in present-day capitalism has one quality that above all else distinguishes it from the smaller competitive firm. It has grown to include among its operational goals some measure of control over the consumer.

> The initiative in deciding what is to be produced comes not from the sovereign consumer who, through the market, issues the instructions that bend the productive mechanism to his ultimate will. Rather it comes from the great producing organisation which reaches forward to control the markets that it is presumed to serve and, beyond, to bend the customer to its needs.[13]

This manipulation of the consumer by the giant corporations arises not from some mean-minded conspiracy, but because that is the way such firms have to behave, operating as they do in an uncertain environment.

State organizations too are growing in size and in the complexity of their role in capitalism. Their environment is also increasingly uncertain. Lambeth is not very different from other urban areas in experiencing shifts in economic circumstances, changes in working-class demands. So the state also seeks to 'bend the customer to its needs', the needs of government. Whereas the firm tries to reduce market uncertainty by controlling demand, through intelligent advertising and judicious product-design, the state uses participatory democracy and the community approach. The applications may be different, but the causes are similar and so are the means: both are phases of corporate decision-making.

Corporate management had concentrated on the internal management structure of councils, getting the best out of limited resources — most significantly out of its own employees. The community approach to management, on the other hand, looks outwards, seeks to learn about the governed population, to win public cooperation and to legitimate its actions through inviting an apparently more direct involvement of ordinary people in the affairs of local government than is afforded by the vote.

COME INTO MY PARLOUR

The connection between the community approach and corporate management will become clearer if we look at the theory which lies behind management. Systems theory is in a sense the thought process of capitalism. It both guides and explains the practice of giant corporations. Cybernetics is the science of control of complex systems. Both are increasingly called upon in the management of state organizations too.

The more complex a system the more varied and plentiful the information needed for its control.[14] Judged by this criterion, strong hierarchies of the kind produced by corporate management reforms in local government are far too inward-looking. Their connections with their environments are too few and are not efficient sources of 'feedback', nor are there appropriate mechanisms to gather, organize and channel information back to the brain-box of the directors' board for decision-making. Besides, corporate management in its local government form pushes control to the top. All the information tends to go in one dimension only, travelling up and down the hierarchy but not across it. It reaches the top in crudely simplified form. In system terms it is a poor design.

The amount of information flowing between a system and its changing environment determines its chances of survival. Insufficient information means incomplete control. Close links can bring the environment into the system, subject it to the same source of governance. In this way, as a local authority gears up to govern more assertively, complementing corporate management with 'the community approach', it is incorporating the community. It is implicitly defining the authority and the governed population, for some purposes, as falling within one and the same system. The 'people' are in there alongside, though obviously distinct from, the state's workers, equally known, equally predictable. Community relations becomes personnel management. An interesting endorsement of this idea has come from a book which applies systems theory to local government planning.

> The two systems overlap to some extent ... for example, community action may be thought of as arising within the urban system and seeking to change the kind, pace and direction of change currently pursued by the planning system. If community groups become institutionalised they may then be best understood as forming part of the planning system itself.[15]

Local government's reformers have seen this inclusion of community into state as a *goal*. 'The most difficult problems do not lie in the integration of the decision-making in the local authority but in the integration of the community and the Corporation', wrote one of the consultant firms.

A HIGH-RISK SOLUTION

The point is this. The potential control of the state increases the more closely the working population is knit to the state system. We should think for the moment not of overtly repressive control but simply of the management of the working class, its 'families' and 'community groups', in the business of reproduction of the labour force and of capitalist relations. But this incorporation of the population is a two-edged sword for the state (and for the working class of course). Because the closer the working-class groups come to inclusion within the state system, the more information *they* obtain and the more dangerous is any disruptive behaviour on their part to the equilibrium of the state. Community workers must be *like-minded* with the local working class if they are to do the council's community relations job well. You don't after all employ a youth-worker who doesn't prefer football to desk work. Yet community workers, with free access to council offices and filing cabinets, may be a menace to authority if they combine disloyalty with intelligence. Imagine too a linking-up

of the workers within the state (say housing officers) and the serviced population (tenants), also now 'in' the state through schemes for involving tenants in management of their estates. Such an alliance would threaten state control. By incorporating the community the state reduces one kind of risk but increases another.

Lambeth Borough Council did indeed experience a rough ride from its neighbourhood councils. Its community workers aided and abetted militant action, including that of squatters, that embarrassed and hindered the council. While in some districts the community approach did co-opt and defuse the upsurge of militancy, in others it only served to intensify it and exposed the council's undefended flank. The council was forced eventually to close the sub-committee that gave community representatives a direct voice in council affairs. Eventually, panicked by the loss of control over its own mis-managed housing, increasingly repaired and lived in by squatters, the council began to wreck its own properties. Management of buildings had been superceded by the imperative to manage people.

Adaptations like this of the way the state system operates represent new phases of class struggle. Organized collective action on housing, education, social security and other state services has sometimes been called 'community action'. The phrase is used somewhat uneasily in view of the feeling many people have that this idea of community originates as much with capital as with the working class. In practice this is organized militancy in the sphere of capitalist reproduction. Seen this way it is closely related to the struggles of women in the family — and indeed the developments of marxist theory arising out of the women's liberation movement have added greatly to the contemporary understanding of the state.[16] Secondly, it is related to the workplace action of state employees in reproductive jobs, such as social workers, teachers and nurses. When links are forged between militants in these three fields of capitalist reproduction, as they increasingly will be, it will represent a formidable complement to industrial action. It will be none too soon if the labour movement, historically limited to the point of production, comes to recognize and to develop within and through such struggles.

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WALTER EASEY

Notes on child labour in Hong Kong [1]

> Little toddling things of four years old ... were kept hour after hour at the monotonous task of thrusting wires into cards with their tiny fingers until their little heads were dazed, their eyes red and sore and the feebler ones grew bent and crooked.

Hong Kong today? No. The description is of the card setting village of Cleckheaton in the early nineteenth century.[2] The comparison, however, is instructive. Hong Kong is a British colony whose legal system is modelled on that of the United Kingdom. But the factors which ended child labour then, do not and cannot operate in Hong Kong today.

In Britain there was a huge increase in child labour between 1780 and 1840, especially in extraction (mines) and manufacturing (factories and out-work). It is clear that the hours became longer and the discipline harsher. Of course, children had been involved in production at earlier points of capitalist development, and also in pre-capitalist modes. In the latter case the extent and nature of their work varied according to the type of agriculture practised and the nature of the political domain (usually feudalism). In both cases the work was within the family economy and under parental care. To some extent the introduction to work was gradual and graded according to the child's abilities, and was broken up by other activities such as child-minding, fruit-gathering, running messages and play. Not that this should be seen as some sort of pre-industrial paradise: the work was often arduous, monotonous and very long. However, there were real restraints imposed by kinship and affection and these were only likely to be abandoned in the extremes of plague, famine or war.

WALTER EASEY is secretary of the Hong Kong Research Project and a Fellow of the Transnational Institute, Amsterdam.

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The brutal application of a child to a machine at the boss's workplace is what distinguishes mature capitalism from its predecessors. Some of the jobs that children did were dictated by their small size, such as working very narrow seams in the outmoded mines and cleaning textile machinery while in operation — the latter being a frequent cause of accident and death. More generally, in the first fifty years of industrialization it was the low wages paid to children (and women) that caused their increased use, particularly where their labour displaced the adult male artisan. Control was another factor — the literature is full of stories of overlookers patrolling with a strap. Where production was still relatively labour-intensive, not only were substantial profits to be made from employing docile, low-paid sweated labour, but it also acted to depress the wages of adult males.

There was a steady reduction in the use of child labour during the last decades of the nineteenth century, and it virtually ceased before the First World War, at any rate from the leading sectors of the economy. The causes of this are complex and uneven, but the main features are as follows. First, production became more capital intensive, particularly in the powerful machine-making industries, and required far higher technological skills than could be found in children. The new trades of boiler-making, lathe and capstan-mill operators, for example, were beyond them, and furthermore implied a higher level of education overall (a point I will return to). Secondly, military requirements of state and Empire called for large standing armies, but recruitment officers were rejecting high proportions of volunteers on health grounds, such as weak hearts and lungs, rheumatism, flat feet and poor eyesight. Towards the end of the nineteenth century this was identified as being due to excessive industrial work at too early an age, and by the Boer War pressure from the military about the health of its recruits was overwhelming. This led to a general outcry about the health of the 'race', to sanitation campaigns, the fostering of the notion of 'motherhood' and the removal of working-class women from the labour force, lest the British Empire fall behind its competitors, especially Germany. Thirdly, as the paperwork of industry and Empire grew, armies of clerks, book-keepers, copyists and secretaries were required more urgently than coal-heavers and machine-minders. Good spelling, a fair copperplate hand and knowledge of double-entry book-keeping were essential, particularly during the heyday of British banking, insurance and financial hegemony. This implied effective mass education, at least until the early teens. A further impulse to this drive for universal and compulsory education was the intentional de-politicizing effect of state propaganda through its school system and the effective transmission of the ideology of social democracy. Lastly, the end of child labour was one of the early demands of organized working-class movements, and a demand all the easier to

concede since the structural requirement for it was either decreasing or counterproductive for the reasons mentioned above.

HONG KONG — CAPITAL AND LABOUR

Hong Kong is one of the world's top twenty trading nations. With a little over 4 million inhabitants (98 per cent Chinese), it exports more than India which has 140 times its population. In per capita terms it is among the top ten traders in the world. The percentage of the total active population involved in manufacturing is the highest in the world and the contribution of manufacturing output to gross domestic product is second only to West Germany. Clearly this is an economy of major global significance.

Prior to the Second World War Hong Kong, however, had minimal manufacturing capacity and performed an entrepôt role, mainly in the fields of import/export, banking, shipping and insurance, for British exploitation of China. In 1941, just before the Japanese occupation, its population was estimated at 1.6 million. By the end of the war it had shrunk to 600,000, partly due to the Japanese policy of forced migration. By 1947 the population had again reached the 1.6 million mark. Between 1948 and 1950 about 400,000 immigrants arrived from China, where the victory of the revolution was approaching. This group contained two sectors that were to provide the take-off necessary to achieve major manufacturing potential through to the 1970s. They were (a) the capitalists, compradores and technical staff (particularly in textiles) fleeing from the revolution, many from Shanghai, and overwhelmingly identified with political support for Chiang Kai-shek's coalition of warlords, reactionaries, gangsters and drug-runners;[3] and (b) the ex-KMT army personnel and their families, landless peasants, a significant proportion of minor criminal elements (pimps, triad members, drug-dealers, etc.), some Christian converts, often following their pastors to Hong Kong, and a variety of other peasants and proletarians.

In terms of capitalist development this represented a *transferred economy*, where entrepreneurs, many of whom had previously operated within the semi-colonial economic dualism of the Treaty Ports like Shanghai (and much of that under British control), brought capital, market knowledge and contacts to Hong Kong. Modern textile machinery was already lying in warehouses there, having originally been destined (in 1945-6) for Shanghai and elsewhere, but held in Hong Kong as conditions 'deteriorated' in the rest of China during the communist sweep south. The entrepreneurs found that their new milieu suited them very well: a business-orientated colonial regime where there was minimal governmental control over any kind of operation; free movement in currency, gold and profits; a benign

and familiar attitude to corruption; available land, and a depressed and cheap labour force.

On the labour side, workers found themselves held tight within a repressive state machinery, set up in response to the great 1925-6 general strike and boycott which nearly destroyed Hong Kong's economic structure. (The importance of these events to the development of the workers' movement for the whole of China has been amply described in Jean Chesneaux's unsurpassable study.[4]) And the situation continues today. Key provisions of the International Labour Organisation conventions, ratified for application in Britain, have been disallowed in Hong Kong, including the vital conventions on unemployment (1919), protection of wages (1949), the right to organize and collective bargaining (1949) and social security, minimum standards (1955). In other cases there has been an average 25-year delay between a convention's adoption in Britain and its implementation in Hong Kong. In addition Hong Kong trade union legislation is designed to keep the unions small, weak, divided and bereft of international affiliations. It is worth noting that the backbone of the British 1971 Industrial Relations Act (now repealed) — with measures such as registration of unions, legislated control of election procedures, accountability of union officials to the Registrar of Unions, procedures for banning uncooperative unions, enforced arbitration, etc. — were drawn from the *existing* Hong Kong legislation! The current restrictions include a ban on unions establishing a political fund for the furtherance of members' interests and a ban on affiliating to international organizations without permission (which, needless to say, is only given if a right-wing union wishes to affiliate with the CIA-front International Confederation of Free Trade Unions).

The paramilitary arm of the government, in the form of riot police backed by Nepalese mercenaries (the so-called Ghurkas), has often been used in strike-breaking and dispersing pickets — the 1967 riots started off with such an incident. The likelihood of riots has been a constant preoccupation of the Hong Kong government since the Second World War, and the amount of time and resources spent on training the highly-organized police and army — forces devoted exclusively to anticipating and suppressing riots — is unparalleled.

These factors, together with a ban on all political parties, zero democratic representation at any level, other than on the powerless Urban Council, and a very active political police presence (Special Branch), combine to make Hong Kong's workers effectively powerless in the face of capital. So we have a situation where free-floating Chinese capital and expertise found in Hong Kong a depressed and *captive* labour force subject to a colonial rule that was well connected to world markets by the existing infrastructure, qualified for Imperial Preference and was open and eager to receive

other capital inputs (such as some of the profits of the Korean War and the partial re-routing of the sizable Overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) remittances). Since the colony had virtually no natural resources, light industrial manufacturing heavily weighted to export became the leading factor in one of the world's most dynamically expanding economies. Once this process was set in motion, the expatriate British conglomerates and banks used their position to invest in the new growth at every level.

Apart from the banks, the four conglomerates most prominent on the Hong Kong scene are Jardine Matheson, Hutchison, Wheelock Marden and the Swire Group (formerly Butterfield and Swire), whose interests include banking, shipping, insurance, property, manufacturing and the control of utilities. Between them, these four are generally reckoned to account for about half the total value of all companies listed on the Colony's stock exchange. In 1971 the head of Jardine's held eighty-seven directorships, including one on the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank (i.e., the institution issuing some 85 per cent of the Colony's currency, controlling two-thirds of its deposits and leading the cartel which sets interest rates). There are fifteen companies in Hong Kong which must have a Jardine official as chairman or effective head, regardless of Jardine's actual holding in the firm. Conglomerates like Jardine's have now branched well outside the confines of the Colony, but Hong Kong is still a privileged base because of the extraordinary licence as regards not only taxation, but also the auditing of accounts and the freedom to move currency; plus, of course, the unparalleled advantage of being in on the inside of every key decision concerning currency supply, lending rates and so on. The Colony, it must also be remembered, is not some minor economy, but in many ways one of the world's *major* economies. In 1973, at the height of the stock market boom, the *average* capitalization value of each of the companies quoted on the Stock Exchange was £405m. Turnover reached as much as £45m in a single day, and the Colony's stock market was doing more business than the exchanges of France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands put together.

It seems that in recent years about half of the new investment coming in has been from the US, 20-25 per cent from Japan and about 20 per cent from Britain, with most of the rest originating from overseas Chinese concerns. Two industrial sectors which have attracted much capital have been electronics and petroleum. In 1972 the US Consulate-General in Hong Kong stated that US-owned firms and firms operating under joint venture with US partners accounted for 70 per cent of all electronics companies. Most of these operate as sub-contractors doing assembly work for the US parent firm, mainly in military-related areas. By Hong Kong standards many of these are large plants, and they are particularly lucrative for the metropolitan

owner since the wage differential in this sector between the US and Hong Kong is maximal: in the USA electronics workers are relatively well paid, whereas in Hong Kong they are the lowest paid industrial workers of all, earning less than workers in any comparable sector, and with little chance of increased earnings since owners pay only a flat daily rate. In the wake of the oil crisis several other larger projects, including a polystyrene plant and a refinery to process oil imported from China, have been started with a number of government incentives, notably in the provision of cheap land. But Hong Kong's manufacturing expansion was built almost entirely on light industry — for example, textiles, clothing, plastics and toys — all using cheap labour to process imported raw materials. And much of Hong Kong's light industrial production is small-scale: figures show over half of all workers in registered factories work in enterprises employing less than nineteen people. The nature of this kind of production makes it easy for Hong Kong capitalists to exploit sudden fads in world markets, whether it be womens' wigs in the 1960s or 'Jaws' shark toys today. The cost of tooling up for the new product is low, the techniques simple to learn and any re-arrangements in the labour force required are not complicated by either premium wages or redundancy payments. It is in these factories that the worst working conditions are found — ventilation, safety procedures, space between workers, fire precautions and sanitation are frequently below acceptable standards. And here too, the highest concentrations of child labour are found.

CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR IN HONG KONG

Robin Porter's 1975 study, *Child Labour in Hong Kong*, has been subjected to a good deal of criticism, particularly in Hong Kong; but his conclusions have never been seriously challenged. Indeed, the only field survey conducted specifically to test his findings suggests Porter's figures are too conservative.[5] By combining the statistics of the most recent (1971) census on the 'economically active' with those of the Labour Department, he was able to show that in 1971 some 36,000 children aged below 14 years were working *legally* and several thousands more illegally. Roughly 30,000 of the former were engaged in 'industrial' occupations (defined as mining, quarrying, manufacture of textiles, chemicals, plastics, construction engineering and so on).

Porter's study deliberately used only government statistics to establish his results. Current evidence indicates that, if anything, the incidence of children working has increased since 1971. Correspondents such as Elsie Elliott note that during the 1974-5 recession in Hong Kong many adult workers were laid off, went on short-time and/or

shared work for some time. Real wages shrank to pre-1970 levels (from which they have not recovered). This resulted in many adult workers, particularly young men, leaving the industrial labour force and taking up other kinds of occupations, especially hawking. Now, as the economy has revived, a good proportion of these workers refuse to be drawn back into what they consider to be essentially unreliable conditions. Part of this labour shortage is therefore filled by children.

The December 1975 survey of 2,000 homes in the Sau Mau Ping estate (a working-class area of Kowloon) found eighty-seven cases of child labour. Each child was interviewed and a report issued summarizing the findings. Nineteen of the children (22%) were boys and sixty-eight (78%) girls. Sixty-five (74.4%) had started work straight after Primary 6 (usually age 12), and of these 65, 90 per cent said that this was because they had been unable to obtain subsidized places for the first year of secondary education. Night classes in the area were ruled out because the only school offering them was located on the top floor of Block 45 — too far for children to go at night due to the high level of crime in the area. That is to say, they could not attend night school for fear of being robbed or sexually assaulted. Further findings, showed that 76 per cent of the families had six to nine members, requiring second, third or fourth incomes to ensure subsistence, and that 55 of the children (60%) turned 75-100 per cent of their earnings over to their parents. One case study quoted:

> The child's family consists of seven: parents, an elder sister, herself, and three younger ones. She was 8 and doing Primary 2 when her father had to stop work for health reasons. Her mother and elder sister then took jobs. She dropped out of school to look after the father and the younger ones. Some days she would baby-sit or do outwork, assembling plastic flowers at home for some pocket money. At the age of 10 she began to work in a small factory, painting toys. Now at 13, she made HK$200 per month. The family had applied for Public Assistance. But her mother recently withdrew the application because she was fed up with the delay of the Social Welfare Department and the hostile attitude of the officials. She'd rather let her child work.[6]

Other results showed that 35 per cent worked in the garment industry, 26 per cent in electronics and 10 per cent in metal works. Thirty-seven children worked in factories with under 50 employees, 44 in medium sized plants (50-499 employees) and 22 in large concerns (500 or more). Wages were substantially less than the government averages for adult workers (HK$700), with over 63 per cent of the sample earning between $300 and $500.

The fundamental cause of child labour in Hong Kong is clearly the

total subjugation of labour in a tightly-policed, entirely unrepresentative colonial structure that acts purely and simply to promote the interests of capital. Few workers earn enough to support a whole family on a single wage, and subsidiary income, including that provided by children, is necessary for survival. Against this general background there are several factors peculiar to Hong Kong which should be looked at. The first is education. With an annual shortfall of around 40,000 secondary school places, that same number of children are effectively out of school from age 11 or 12. (Secondary education is neither free nor compulsory.) The second is the low level of social welfare provisions to protect a family against ill-health, unemployment or accident to the main wage-earner. To take but one example — heroin addiction. There are about 100,000 heroin addicts, practically all adult males. Although it is hard to generalize, probably less than half of these are earning wages, and in any case, much of their earnings will go on dope. In many of these families children will have to go to work to feed the remainder of the family. A third factor is the traditional attitude of the Chinese family, whereby it is common to find a girl dropping out of school and going to work to pay the school fees of her brother. This subordination to traditional concepts of male superiority helps to explain the disproportionately large numbers of young girls found in surveys of child labour. The Sau Mau Ping sample shows girls outnumbering boys by nearly 3½ to 1.

Two further factors that contribute to the situation are the inadequacy of the existing legislation and a general failure to enforce even that. The number of prosecutions is low (only 306 cases brought in 1975) and the size of the fines derisory (averaging £40 in 1975, but in some cases as low as £2.35).[7] The Labour Department employs seventy-one inspectors to visit factories and they record an annual total of over 100,000 visits.[8] By the time one takes into account travelling, report-writing, meal-breaks and leave, the average duration of each visit is just a few minutes. Corruption is widespread amongst the factory inspectorate and it is a well-known practice for inspectors to telephone ahead so anything they might not wish to see can be cleared away. The prosecutions that do occur are either as a result of sudden campaigns (usually timed to coincide with some new airing of the problem) or, one suspects, against factory managements that won't pay up. In any case, there is no inspection of outwork, which is where large numbers of very young children are employed at the lowest rates. Another factor is the shortage and poor quality of low-cost housing and the massive overcrowding that results. The 1971 Census showed that only 92,168 dwellings were inhabited at the rate of one person to each room or cubicle, while 90,104 were occupied at the rate of five or more to each room or cubicle. One wonders how many British schoolchildren could study for their 'O' levels in a room shared by four or more others?

CONCLUSION

Few of the forces that led to the reduction and abolition of child labour in Britain have emerged in Hong Kong, in fact particular local factors have tended to increase the size of the problem. For example, while Britain's army was intended for external aggression, Hong Kong's requirements are for internal suppression, and as these are largely supplied from Nepalese mercenaries (with some British troops), military demands for the end of child labour (to obtain healthier recruits) do not arise. Nor are there demands arising from either strong trade unions or populist elected legislators. The economy is still predominantly light-industrial, and what there is of the education system is deemed sufficient to produce both skilled workers, where necessary, and the clerical staff for business. (One of the implications of the computerization of capitalist accounting, etc., is a *reduction* in demand for literate and numerate clerical staff. One computer-programmer replaces 100 typists, filing clerks, secretaries and copytypists.) Hong Kong is one of the last places in the world where the Confucian traditions combine to encourage the subordination of childrens' ambitions to the survival of the family unit — it even receives official support. The effect is strongest for young girls, and results in their widespread employment in industry, at home and, it should be stated, in brothels. For prostitution is a service industry under capitalism, albeit a particularly poorly-paid and alienating one. Many Hong Kong prostitutes are very young indeed, including some under 14. In part this arises from a belief among dissipated wealthy businessmen that intercourse with a virgin has rejuvenatory powers, hence the demand for very young prostitutes to simulate virginal status. And finally, there is inadequate legislation listlessly enforced by an insufficient and corrupt labour inspectorate to complete the picture.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to consider the more general applications of the notion of a *transferred economy*. Hong Kong is a clear case of such a system. The concept could also usefully be applied to other countries and economies, such as Taiwan, South Korea and Puerto Rico, and even to the sub-economies of emigré groups such as the Cuban enclaves in Florida. The particular poignancy of looking at child labour in Hong Kong arises from the fact that 40 miles up the road from the sweatshops of Kowloon, children in the People's Republic of China are engaged in agricultural and industrial production as a regular part of their education from primary school up to university. The Chinese are rather proud of this and many socialists in other parts of the world applaud their achievements in this field. In the one case, we condemn the practice as vicious colonial exploitation; in the other, we praise it as an example of progressive socialist education. And this, surely is the point. It is

not children working, per se, that we find abhorrent; it is their exploitation under conditions of utter choicelessness imposed by a colonial gangster regime. Furthermore, the use of child labour in Hong Kong will surely survive the most assiduous and well-publicized campaigns of the Hong Kong Government. Its transformation to an unalienated and acceptable form will await the reincorporation of Hong Kong into the rest of China, where it belongs.

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1 Much of this essay is the result of ruthless piracy of other people's work and ideas. In particular, the early parts on theory and British history have been stolen from Anna Davin, who could have written it much better were she not busy completing her pioneering study of 'Imperialism and the Cult of Motherhood'. The latter half is mostly lifted from either Jon Halliday or Robin Porter. The bits I have got wrong are all my own work.
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5 Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee, *Child Labour in HK-87 cases*
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8 Written Answers to Robert Parry, MP *Commons Hansard* (8 December 1976), cols. 252-7. The ability of a backbench MP to extract 'sensitive' information out of Parliament is priceless in this kind of work. Some of the tireless investigations of Parry, Stan Newens and Frank Hooley have been devastating in uncovering information otherwise unobtainable.

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Further information may be obtained by writing to the Hong Kong Research Project, 101-103 Gower Street (basement), London WC1E 6AW, UK.

Preface to Akhtar Baluch's prison diary*

On 25th July 1970 Akhtar Baluch, an 18-year-old college student of Hyderabad, was arrested by the police for having gone on hunger strike in protest against the detention of Sindhi nationalist and peasant leaders. Like hundreds of other political prisoners, she could not have but felt confident that her imprisonment would last only as long as the interim regime of General Yahya Khan which had scheduled the country's first general elections for December 1970. General Yahya Khan had taken over the reins of power after his predecessor General Ayub Khan's ten-year long dictatorship had fallen in Spring 1969, due to five months of mass agitation for political freedoms. Yahya had conceded many popular demands, including the dissolution of 'One Unit' — an arrangement imposed in 1955 which amalgamated the four provinces of West Pakistan into a single administrative unit and which had become the bone of contention between the dominant Punjab province and the three smaller provinces of Sind, Baluchistan and North West Frontier. The 'One Unit' had ceased to be an election issue; but its consequences had agitated the minds of the people of the three smaller provinces to such an extent that there was no let up in political activity directed towards achieving regional and ethnic equality.

The most volatile of the minority provinces, undoubtedly, was Sind, whose ethnic composition, economy and social life had been more drastically altered by the creation of Pakistan in 1947 and the formation of 'One Unit' in 1955 than those of any other region of Pakistan, including East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The departure of nearly one million Sindhi Hindus and the arrival of over one million

*Excerpts from the diary were published in the Winter 1977 issue of this journal under the title 'Sister, Are You Still Here?' This preface, in keeping with the time scale of repressive societies, arrived some time later. But it sets Akhtar's diary so poignantly and politically in the context of her country that we are glad we can publish it now.

Race & Class, XVIII, 4 (1977)

Urdu-speaking Muslims following the partition, the large-scale in-migration of workers, traders and officials from the upcountry as a result of development of industry and commerce in the lower Sind, and the settlement of Punjabi farmers in Sind's rural areas had reduced the proportion of Sindhis — who used to comprise nearly 90 per cent of the province's population — to a mere 55 per cent by the time Akhtar Baluch and her cohorts raised the banner of Sindhi national rights. The demographic transformation was only a glaring manifestation of the overall de-Sindhiization of Sind, at the root of which lay the all-important economic disinheritance of the Sindhi people. Sind contained 45 per cent of West Pakistan's industry, but Sindhis had no share in it — either as workers or as owners. Similarly, the share of Sindhis in the lucrative commerce and urban real estate business was negligible. Punjabis and Urdu-speaking refugees held the lion's share in government and private jobs. The last bastion of Sindhi (landlord) economic power — agricultural lands — was now being rapidly eroded as a result of the distribution to the refugees of 1.5 million acres of land left behind by the Hindu emigrants, allotment of several million acres of newly-developed canal-irrigated land to Punjabi settlers, mainly military officers, and purchase of Sindhi lands by enterprising Punjabi farmers. At the same time, as much as 85 per cent of the Sindhi peasantry — probably the most depressed in the subcontinent — was landless. The economic exploitation and domination of the Sindhi people had its counter-part in the regime's cultural and educational policies. In the whole of West Pakistan Sindhi was the only vernacular tongue which was used as a language of literacy — it was no less developed than Urdu which was being officially promoted as the national language of Pakistan. Disregarding this reality, the Government of Ayub Khan made Urdu compulsory for the Sindhi students and discontinued, by a verbal order, the teaching of Sindhi to non-Sindhis in Sind.

These were some of the major factors which contributed to the growing alienation of Sindhi people from the Punjabi-based central government. So much so that the Sindhis had begun to liken themselves to American Indians. The collapse of Ayub Khan's dictatorship and the resumption of political agitation provided the Sindhis with an opportunity to translate their alienation and resentment into a vociferous movement for the attainment of their national rights. The legitimacy of their cause was established beyond doubt, and its triumph seemed well within the range of possibility. An unrelenting struggle was needed. In this climate of righteousness and hope it was difficult for any Sindhi youth to stand on the sidelines. Akhtar was among those whose family background and political upbringing had prepared them to take the initiative in such struggles and risk imprisonment or worse.

Thus, it is understandable that the unjustness of alien domination

and the righteousness of the Sindhi cause weighed heavily on Akhtar's mind as she entered the Hyderabad Central Prison. But before long, particularly since her conviction and transfer to the Sukkur jail, she was brought face to face with another grim reality: the oppression within the landlord-dominated Sindhi society. Akhtar's political upbringing had prepared her to comprehend and condemn this oppression. The nationalist movement, particularly the Sindhi People's movement to which Akhtar belonged, had a strong anti-feudal bias. Not only was the national oppression of Sind seen in class terms, but the Sindhi landlord class itself was considered to be the principal enemy of the Sindhi people. The landlord not only directly oppressed the peasants but paved the way for alien domination, both by weakening the Sindhi people's ability to resist and by acquiescing in the transfer of land to the aliens in order to keep the peasant in his bondage.

Observers of Sind's social scene seem unanimous in their opinion that the root cause of the backwardness and misery of Sindhis lies in Sind's *Zamindari* or feudal system, in which the *Zamindar* (landlord) possesses unrestricted power to exploit and oppress the *Hari* (peasant). The following excerpts from a report by a senior government official depict some aspects of this extremely oppressive relationship.

> The *hari*, who has cultivated a piece of land for several generations, does not know how long he will be allowed to stay on it. Fear reigns supreme in the life of the *hari* — fear of imprisonment, fear of losing his land, wife or life.... He might have to leave his crop half ripe, his cattle might also be snatched [away] and he might be beaten out of the village. He might suddenly find himself in the fetters of police under an enquiry for theft, robbery or murder...
>
> The *hari* fears the Zamindar's punishment more than he fears the tortures of hell...
>
> ...As soon as the Zamindar appears on the fields the *hari* and his children go and bow before him till they touch his feet, then rise up to kiss his hand...
>
> A good-looking wife is a constant source of danger even to his life. The *hari* is asked to surrender her and he is subjected to intimidation, threat or coercion. If he does not yield, the wife is kidnapped or he is sent behind the bars in a false criminal case and the wife left alone is compelled to live with the Zamindar. The *hari* is even murdered if the Zamindar sees no other hope of success.[1]

As a politically-conscious woman, Akhtar, no doubt, understood that the feudal system had reserved its worst harshness for the womenfolk. Thus, on the very second day of her imprisonment she

observes in her diary that the Sindhi daughter is treated like a 'sacrificial lamb'. She refers to two opposite customs of marrying off the daughter to anyone, at any age, against her will, and not allowing her to marry at all. The first of these customs is or has been common in many other parts of the world. The second is a peculiar device of the Muslim landed aristocracy of Sind to deny a share in property, permissible under Islamic law, to daughters and to consolidate the inheritance in the male line. This practice is nurtured in a milieu in which all classes share the idea that the marriage of the daughter brings about the disarming of her parents before her in-laws. Since the woman is considered to be weak and helpless and she is married into a family, rather than to a man, her parents fear that any resentment against them on the part of her in-laws would be taken out on her. Notwithstanding, this is rarely a reason for celibacy among the lower and middle classes. However, to the ruling-class families this weapon of blackmail creates an annoying obstacle in the exercise of their social power.

The concept that the marriage of a daughter is demeaning is buttressed by the role of sex in the display of property and power. The status of a landlord is reflected not only in the size of his holding, his political influence and his ability to cause damage to others, but also by the lavishness with which he engages in the various feudal sports, including seducing, snatching, marrying and raping women. His sexual appetite is supposed to reflect his social power. Sexual conquest also accomplishes social submission. The exercise of the *droit du seigneur* and other sexual abuses over the peasant women may only mean the satisfaction of the landlord's sexual lust and further humiliation of the peasant, already terrorized into submission by other means, but it is not uncommon for a powerful landlord — particularly a politician — to humble a recalcitrant bureaucrat or a landlord opponent by raping his daughter. Thus, in the ethos of the landlord class, marriage is seen, more than anything else, as an act of sexual conquest or subjugation. The family which gives its daughter to another family forfeits the right to stand up against the latter. For a big landlord, particularly a *Sayed* (the supposed descendant of Prophet Mohammed), to give the hand — rather, vagina — of his daughter or sister in marriage to another person amounts to demeaning himself before that person and his kin. Due to the exigencies of building social and political bonds, the impulse for hypergamy and other countervailing factors, the marriage of most upper-class women is still possible. Yet, a significant proportion of them are never able to marry.

Since the *Sayeds* and *Peers* (spiritual leaders) have to maintain their religious sanctity, the non-marriage of their daughters creates a dilemma for them, for Islam enjoins the Muslims to marry. The dilemma is resolved by resort to either of the two pseudo-religious

rituals. In one of these the eligible daughter forgives her father for not fulfilling his duty and renounces her right to marriage, while the second ritual consists of performing her wedding to the Holy Quran.

In making woman a scapegoat for redeeming the exaggerated sense of honour of man, Sindhi society has yet another distinction: the custom of *Karo* and *Kari*. The two words are masculine and feminine for black, meaning sinner. In the upper Sind, particularly among the tribes of Baluchi origin, a man who suspects his wife or a female relative of having a love affair, kills her and her lover without hesitation. For this he needs no evidence; a false rumour or a taunt is sufficient to provoke the 'man of honour' to pick up his axe and chop off the head of his wife. The total absence of compassion for women is described by Rashdi, the chronicler of the Sindhi landlord class, in these words:

> In the matters of love and love-making, if a woman becomes a victim of a mere suspicion, she is likely to die like a dog or a cat. After killing her they usually throw her corpse into the river. However, if there is no river nearby and a need is felt for burying her, a deep hole is dug and the corpse, without being shrouded, is dragged by the hand or leg and thrown into the pit. It is then filled up with earth and levelled off. There would neither be a grave nor any sign of a fence. The family members of the murdered woman dare not remember her or mention her name.[2]

The killer of a *Kari* is regarded as a hero — a brave and self-respecting man who vindicated his honour. The whole community enters into a conspiracy of silence to protect him from the law; and if he is apprehended, everybody is expected to render him help. Even the law allows him consideration. Under section 304 of Pakistan Penal Code such murders are described as 'culpable homicide' and are not subject to capital punishment. This loophole in the law has provided for further cruelty against women. A man murdering another man over property or some other quarrel, often kills his own wife, throws her corpse beside that of the murdered man, declares them *Karo* and *Kari*, and pleads for lighter punishment under section 304.

There is only one way for the *Kari* to escape death, i.e., to take refuge in the court of the tribal or clan chief, who keeps the woman for three months before convening the *Jirga* (council of elders) and giving his judgement. His ruling is binding on all the members of the community. He may order the kin of the *Kari* to recompense the husband, or may even fine the latter for wrongly suspecting his wife. But there is no question of the husband taking his wife back. She is usually sold outside the community and the proceeds are split equally between the chief and the aggrieved party. In some instances the chief may decide to keep her for himself. Thus a *Kari*, on rare

occasions, may be able to save her life, but under no circumstances can she retrieve her honour. Her lover, on the other hand, can go scot free if, on the ruling of the chief, he compensates her husband by giving him his own sister in marriage or her money equivalent.

Perhaps it was due to the vivid picture she had of the Sindhi woman's docility and helplessness that Akhtar Baluch's experience in the Sukkur jail surprised her as much as the readers of her prison diary. So many innocent and affectionate village women had stained their hands with the blood of their husbands and relatives! How could these humble and mute creatures, who did not even have the right to love and marry by their choice, commit the most serious crime in the eyes of the law! Akhtar and her companion, Naseem, began to unravel the secrets of this apparent discrepancy as they overcame the initial suspicion and fear of the women prisoners. The peasant women opened their hearts to the college girls, went into a deep communion with them and poured out the sorrows which would have otherwise remained trapped within the suffocating walls of the prison and died along with their bearers on the scaffold. Akhtar went on recording, in a simple and straightforward style, the tales women narrated to her and the events she saw taking place in the prison, without ever realizing that her slender and unpretentious note book would turn out to be one of the harshest indictments of the Sindhi feudal society and would open the eyes of her countrymen to a gruesome social reality which not even the most radical and rebellious Pakistani men had thought about.

Except for making a few spontaneous comments here and there, Akhtar attempts no sociological or psychological analysis of the phenomenon which had touched her so deeply. Perhaps, in this unadulterated form the value of her diary is enhanced rather than reduced. The reader can see for himself that the murderers, far from being 'criminals' or 'deviants', are actually the helpless victims of an abominable sex oppression.

Between feeling the oppression and committing murder, there is progressive alienation of the victim. When oppression and humiliation reach a point where the victim is made to realize that the society is not only insensitive to her pain but, on the contrary, considers it wicked for the victim to even feel the pain, the process of rejection of social norms is more or less completed. The victim then enters into a new realm of freedom in which she can pursue the chosen value in isolation from the norms governing its mode and limits of realization. Powerlessness breeds fantasies, and fantasies provide the needed avenue for the redemption of values held dear by the alienated. Then the phantom hero appears in flesh and blood, offering the woman the much longed-for love, a packet of cyanide to remove the hurdle in the way of its fulfilment and, above all, an opportunity to prove her fidelity by covering up his crime and dooming herself to death or long

imprisonment. Then, in the face of legal punishment and social condemnation, the test of fidelity is supposed to sustain her during her long and agonizing years in gaol.

How the cherished values of love, affection and fidelity are perverted into weapons of self-abasement and self-destruction for women is, perhaps, best exemplified by the case of Zainab in the diary. She killed her husband and his family, not because of the cruelties of her husband, not on the prompting of a seducer, but to oblige her brother — to enable him to trade her for a second wife. Committing the murder was only half of her demonstration of affection and loyalty for her brother. The other half was to keep silent and suffer legal punishment and social disgrace. Yet it was not enough for Zainab's brother, for the sister's shame rubs off on the brother. He had to denounce her as a woman of loose morals.

The seeming insensibility and callousness of the peasant man, himself so oppressed and helpless, can be understood only in terms of the pervasive brutality and insensibility of the *Zamindari* system. The ceaseless all-round suffering and humiliation blunt the feeling of compassion in the oppressed so that he becomes impervious to the sighs of his fellow sufferers. Thus we notice that even the imprisoned peasant women, the apparent terminal recipients of cumulative social oppression, display a callous lack of compassion when it comes to the woes of a fellow condemned woman belonging to a low Hindu caste.

There is nothing new in making the assertion that sex oppression is only a part of the general oppression of society based on private ownership of means of production and exploitation of man by man. Yet, this cardinal point is often missed in the heat of direct confrontation, because for a person inside the forest it may be difficult to see the wood for the trees. However, when the forest is thick and remote it may not be possible to overlook it. Hence, western readers, particularly women, would probably find this diary invaluable. It lays bare the social context of women's oppression more convincingly than most elaborate sociological analyses.

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Notes and documents

Resolutions from the 2nd Conference of the Organization of Mozambican Women

In November 1976 the Organization for Mozambican Women (OMM) held its second conference in Maputo. Over 200 women from all provinces came together to formulate the aims and programme of their organization. These excerpts and summaries of points from the Conference Report were compiled by Hermione Harris. *This is not an official translation. For a complete text of conference resolutions see* People's Power in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau (*Number 6, January-February 1977, MAGIC, 12 Little Newport Street, London WC2AH 7JJ*).

SOME OF THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING WOMEN TODAY

Introduction

The present predicament of Mozambican women reveals a lower level of development compared with men in cultural, socio-political and economic terms. This stems from discrimination in education in traditional society, aggravated by racial, social and sexual discrimination imposed by Portuguese colonialism. It is in this context that we can understand why illiteracy, religious mystification, tribalism, regionalism and racism, and inferiority complexes are all more deeply rooted in women.

Illiteracy

Women's secondary status in traditional society was reinforced by their inability to acquire new knowledge and skills under colonialism, especially literacy.

Illiteracy affects the vast majority of the Mozambican people. It has a particularly high incidence among women who were doubly exploited in traditional and colonial society, which instilled in women a feeling of inferiority and dependence and conditioned them merely to please men and run a household.

Colonial education only reached a small number of Mozambicans because of racial discrimination and class differentials. Unbridled exploitation made it impossible for the people to afford education, school materials and other related expenses. That only left the missions, which nurtured a spirit of conformism and passivity through teaching mystifying ideas. This only added to the feelings of inferiority stemming from traditional society.

The difficulties produced by illiteracy are evident in various everyday situations.

1 During the armed struggle we needed training to help us handle certain problems — for instance, how to assess distance — so instruction had to be given in schools.
2 Those who cannot read or write cannot understand or put into effect the written directives of state and party organs. This also applies to other instructions such as books on politics, circulars from party headquarters, principles of hygiene, use of medicines, medical prescriptions, use of fertilizer and so on.
3 The illiterate person cannot exchange correspondence.
4 Ignorance about weights and measures and the value of money makes it easier for people to be cheated in shops.
5 A husband might deceive his wife about the level of his earnings.

In Mozambique, the problem is made worse for those who have not been to school because that means that they cannot speak Portuguese either, which is the official language of communication. This limits women's access to information. These difficulties were evident even during the course of the Second Conference: because of illiteracy, a large proportion of the delegates could not follow the reading and discussion of the reports.

Divisions among Women

'Assimilation', the colonial policy whereby some western-educated Mozambicans were granted Portuguese status, divides the people and weakens them politically, as do tribalism and racism. All these things affect solidarity among women.

Within the OMM there are women who refuse to work under a comrade from another province or race. How many cases do we know of children who despise their parents because they are black or ignorant? How many cases do we know of parents who act like servants to their own children because the latter are 'mulatto'* or

*Mulatto or 'mestizo': being of ethnically mixed parentage (mestizos were considered of slightly higher status than blacks).

'assimilado'? Racial prejudices still give rise to erroneous ideas about who is Mozambican and who is not. The criterion is still always race. This is particularly a problem in the cities. Lack of political awareness — resulting from a failure to take part in study and political work among the people — leads to the perpetuation of these errors with all their serious consequences.

Many women suffer from a lack of self-confidence, making them ineffective, and suspicious of each other. They are further divided by class and social status. Single and divorced women are also socially isolated and stigmatized, whereas men in the same position are not.

The process of rendering women inferior originates in traditional education. It is reinforced by 'initiation rites' and other such traditional practices which lead to passive acceptance and lack of initiative. The woman becomes an object of appropriation and pleasure, bartered by her family and subjugated to her husband's will. On top of this age-old process, women also suffered the humiliation of colonial society which robbed them of their husbands and children and exploited them at work. Colonialism very often left prostitution as the only means of a livelihood... By discriminating against the illiterate woman, it made her feel more inferior because she neither understood nor belonged to the (alienating) way of life in the urban areas.

This feeling of inferiority holds women back from participating in meetings and even in family discussions — in front of their husbands and children, women feel unable to express their own opinions. Their inhibitions and lack of initiative in turn produce an inability to take on responsible jobs or to break away from this conditioning. Furthermore, the 'assimilated' woman humiliates her 'non-assimilated' sister by adopting showy manners and idiosyncracies, talking in incomprehensible terms and setting herself apart from the rest.

Another form of superiority is 'veteranism' which is reflected in the need to be forever reasserting the fact that one has been involved in the struggle for a long time. Women who do this think that in this way they will increase their own social standing...

If the situation is not objectively analysed, women run the risk of coming to regard not only men but also other women as their enemies. Married women and women who are generally frustrated tend to regard single women — that is single mothers, divorced women and spinsters — as emancipated. Women whose feelings of inferiority and dependence in relation to men are deeply embedded are incapable of conceiving of life without men.

Problems in the towns

The special problems of women in the towns are seen not just from their personal dependence on men, but also as a result of colonialism. Abortion, prostitution, divorce, alchoholism, abandoned children, unemployment — all call for practical measures of education and organization. But they also must be seen in the context of the fight against cultural imperialism, and the undermining of Mozambican society. Through the imposition of western bourgeois values, individualism and promiscuity are mistaken for emancipation.

The aim of the revolution is the ending of all forms of exploitation and oppression. For the revolution to succeed, we must completely eradicate the exploitation and oppression women suffer. While suffering the same exploitation and oppression suffered by all Mozambican people, women also had to bear the special victimization of their sex. The city, the bourgeois fortress and the focal point for the sharpening of the class struggle, is where women feel this double oppression and exploitation most acutely.

As workers, they are obliged to sell their labour for miserable wages, and to sell their bodies to their exploiters — only to find themselves rejected and discriminated against by their own class. As housewives, they are cut off from the essential problems of social life and reduced to serving their husbands, who are themselves exploited and oppressed. Finally, women of the petty-bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie assimilate bourgeois cultural and moral ideas and become vehicles for, and agents of, conservative and reactionary ideology. In the city, traditional social values are broken down, only to be replaced by the vices, alienation and decadence characteristic of the colonial bourgeoisie. It is also in the city that the people are least organized. This leaves them more susceptible to vices, and at the same time makes it more difficult to work out a plan of action to combat them.

The assimilation of bourgeois values brought about by colonialism (particularly in the cities) led women to consider a bourgeois life style as the ideal situation to aim for. This leads them to believe that to be emancipated is to be free as an individual, regardless of the norms of social conduct. This liberalism denies the importance of putting FRELIMO's political line into practice in daily life. It denies the importance of collective living and extols individualism.

Problems in the rural areas

Traditional practices still exist which endanger women's physical and psychological health, and deny them control over their own lives. A proper analysis must be made of these customs, so that women may understand them and so resist more effectively.

In the rural areas, the Mozambican peasant woman knew of colonial exploitation through the pillaging of the lands and the shops. She knew colonialism as a repressive system which, through the administrative machine, took her husband and children away for the degradation and misery of forced labour.

Quite apart from this exploitative and oppressive system to which all the people were subjected, the Mozambican peasant woman is subjected to a second form of oppression which stems from the traditional feudal ideology. That ideology conceives of the woman's role as serving men — as an object of pleasure, as a procreator and as an unpaid worker.

The ideological values of the traditional feudal society are inculcated in a woman from the moment she is born by a whole educational system within the family. That education is different for a boy than for a girl. It inculcates in her the spirit of submission to the man, and in him the spirit of authority. The woman's societal position is consecrated in ceremonies and institutions like 'the initiation rites' and the system of marriage; that is, Lobolo,* premature and forced marriages and polygamy. And the educational effect of ceremonies and institutions, practised in traditional feudal society for centuries, brought the woman to assume an inferior and passive position. Because the capacity to revolt and to have a critical mind were destroyed, the woman later became the disseminator and defender of retrograde and reactionary values.

Initiation rites: Initiation rites inculcate into women submissiveness and total dependence on men. Women are conditioned to submit and gradually come to take their inferiority for granted. They are brought up with the sole aim of serving men — as objects of pleasure, sources and producers of labour. The treatment of women is the same throughout the country: the form may vary, but the final objective is always the same. To make the young girl submissive and resigned to physical suffering, terrible treatment is inflicted.

Lobolo: This practice exists throughout the country. Its rationale is that it is compensation for the transfer of labour power from one family to another. This puts women into a situation of total dependence on men, who because they have paid for them, can use and disown them like mere objects. Despite work already carried out, this practice still persists. Experience has shown that women are still not aware of their oppressed condition or of the real implications of 'lobolo'. Many still defend it on the grounds that without the payment of a 'lobolo' they have not been taken as legitimate and honest women.

Polygamy: In our patriarchal society, the man is the owner of all material goods produced within the family. Polygamy is a system whereby the man possesses a number of wives. As head and

*Lobolo: bride price.

proprietor of the family, he acquires more wives to augment the labour force at his service. In addition to this, society's contempt for the single woman leads her to marry a man even if he is already married. It should also be pointed out that in the majority of cases it is the wife herself who procures other wives for her husband, with the object of increasing the labour force to help her in family production.

PROGRAMME FOR ACTION

The strategy in the present phase of the Mozambican revolutionary struggle was laid down by the 8th Central Committee Meeting of FRELIMO, held in February 1976. It was reiterated by our Comrade President in his opening speech to the 2nd Conference. It is:

> The development of the material and ideological basis for the construction of a Socialist society.
>
> Production must be the principal work in building socialism. The principal activity must be that of class struggle.

The OMM took part in the working out of this programme. Its objective was defined as being: to find ways to achieve woman's emancipation from all forms of exploitation through her integration into the principal task. To do this the OMM should:

1 See to it that every woman becomes involved in production (either in the factory or in the agricultural cooperative), in the organization and planning of work and social life. Women must also become involved in the development of the new man and the new society.
2 Organize the fight against old ideas which are a huge obstacle to the full involvement of the woman as a citizen in public and social life. Such ideas inhibit her participation in economic life as a producer and in family life as a truly revolutionary companion and educator.
3 Fully review the present structures so as to ensure that the OMM's new structures effectively reflect the worker-peasant class as the vanguard leading Mozambican society in the construction of socialism.

Women in the communal village and agricultural cooperative

Agriculture is the basis of our economy and of the economic development of our country. It is also the sector in which the majority of women are involved. Their participation up to now has been limited to the carrying out of projects and activities developed and led by men. The reorganization of agriculture on a collective

basis through communal villages and cooperatives opens new perspectives for the development of the countryside and the life of the peasant. It also opens up greater possibilities for woman's involvement in that process, on an equal footing with men. This will accelerate her emancipation.

The Conference recommends the involvement of women in setting up communal villages and production cooperatives.

Throughout all of this, the OMM's main concern is to establish a woman's belief in her own abilities. Job discrimination must be rejected at the outset ... by making woman value herself, and learn to do those jobs which are traditionally man's preserve.

Women in the factory

The 2nd Conference feels that the woman worker is relegated to doing the routine jobs which demand least mental exertion. They are usually non-mechanized, manual jobs. Discriminated against by her fellow workmates, inhibited by feelings of inferiority from actively participating in the political struggle within the firm, the woman has not developed a class consciousness.

Freed for work by creches and canteens, women must be trained in all aspects of production, and be proportionally represented on production councils. Similar recommendations for political work, collective organization and involvement of women in production are made for those in the service and industrial sectors, and for housewives.

THE IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGN

Education

Recommendations are made on schooling, and on political, scientific and vocational training for women as an essential part of the programme to raise their political consciousness. The media should be used to promote these aims and project a new image of women, participating in all areas of rebuilding society.

Women and men must also be made conscious of their own roles in the educational process.

Discrimination against women starts soon after birth. It is obvious in the different treatment given to a male child. A girl is, from earliest infancy, trained to carry out domestic tasks and serve men. That includes even her younger brothers.

The boys, on the other hand, are trained to assume responsibilities and also to be always waited on by women — their mother, their sisters and, therefore later, their wife.

This process of indoctrination is carried out by the actual parents. It has a logical continuation in school life. The boys always have more demands made of them. The girls always follow. They never lead.

It is a matter of urgency that the OMM:

- make the mother aware of her responsibility in the development of new attitudes and outlook amongst the family. The OMM must show women that they themselves contribute to the oppression from which they suffer because of the education they give their own male children.
- Encourage the idea that school, above the age of 7 years, is as much for girls as for boys.
- Recommend that the Party's political courses include the problem of the emancipation of women. This will help all cadres to understand and carry on the fight for women's liberation. It should be a matter of priority to all revolutionaries of both sexes.

External relations

During the armed struggle for national liberation, FRELIMO always attached great importance to international solidarity and cooperation. It was in this spirit that the OMM developed relations with other women's organizations. However, because of deficiencies in the politics, organizations and structures of the OMM, the true value of these contacts with women in other countries was never realized.

The OMM should work to renew its relations with other women's organizations, especially those whose objectives and activities identify with ours, that is, those who are involved in a revolutionary process and the construction of socialism and with whom FRELIMO and the People's Republic of Mozambique have good relations. These relations are designed to:

- Get to know the experiences of female vanguard revolutionaries in the class struggle and the building of socialism.
- Give an idea of our struggle and experience as a contribution to women in their fight for liberation.
- Reinforce relations with all liberation movements throughout Africa and the world, in line with the spirit of proletarian internationalism.

The struggle continues!
Maputo, 17 November 1976

UK commentary

*THE RACE RELATIONS ACT 1976**

The Race Relations Act 1976 received the Royal Assent on 22 November 1976... It replaces entirely the Race Relations Act 1968 and what remained of the Race Relations Act 1965. The Act deals with discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins. Discrimination may be of two kinds: (1) direct discrimination in which people are treated less favourably than others on grounds of colour, race, etc.; and (2) indirect discrimination where everyone is treated the same, but there are conditions or requirements which put members of a particular racial group at a disadvantage compared with others and which cannot be justified on non-racial grounds. Direct discrimination remains much the same as under the 1968 Act, but indirect discrimination is quite new. It may also be discrimination to victimize anyone who makes a complaint about discrimination. Subject to exceptions, racial discrimination covers much the same ground as under the 1968 Act. It makes discrimination unlawful in employment, education, the provision of goods, facilities or services to the public, and in transactions in property, including housing. In all these areas employers are vicariously liable to acts of discrimination done by their employees, and anyone who uses an agent is liable for discrimination done by the agent in the course of his or her duties.

Under the 1968 Act victims of discrimination could only complain to the Race Relations Board or one of its nine regional conciliation committees. They had a duty to investigate all complaints, except in employment cases where special joint industrial machinery had been set up. There was no right of individual recourse to any court or tribunal except for complaints about dismissal on racial grounds, which, from the time of the Industrial Relations Act 1971, went to Industrial Tribunals as a complaint of unfair dismissal. The new Act changes this. Subject to exceptions, victims of discrimination will now all be able to take their alleged discrimination to an industrial tribunal in employment cases, even where dismissal is not the issue, and to a County or Sheriff Court in all others. The introduction of an individual remedy is one of the big changes in the new Act.

The other big change is the disappearance of the Race Relations Board (RRB) and its replacement by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), which has much greater powers of investigation and enforcement. The Community Relations Commission has also been absorbed into the new body. Under the 1968 Act the RRB could only start a general investigation if racial discrimination was suspected,

*Excerpts from *Race Relations: the New Law*, by Ian MacDonald, (London, Butterworths, forthcoming).

and it had no power to subpoena witnesses or obtain documents. Its inquiries could be and often were frustrated by the non-cooperation of those being investigated. The new CRE will be able to start investigations if it thinks fit. Where these are into specific complaints, it has full subpoena powers. In other cases the Home Secretary can give it the necessary authority. Wherever the CRE finds discrimination, with the exception of public-sector education, it can issue non-discrimination notices telling discriminators to stop discriminating and requiring them to make any necessary changes in their practices or other arrangements. In addition the CRE has a whole host of other functions, including that of advising and helping individual victims of discrimination.

Why the new Act

The new Act has been prompted by a number of factors. First there have been the findings of the PEP study of racial disadvantage,[1] which have shown that the level of racial discrimination has remained very high despite the existence of the 1968 Act. They estimated that a coloured unskilled worker has a one in two chance of being discriminated against when applying for a job, a coloured skilled worker a one in five chance, and a coloured white-collar worker a one in three chance.

In housing too there was discrimination. Applicants for rented accommodation faced discrimination in 27 per cent of cases, and estate agents discriminated against house buyers in 17 per cent of cases.

The second factor prompting the new Act has been the obvious ineffectiveness of the 1968 Act. Both the RRB and the Community Relations Commission have forcefully drawn attention to the inability of the legislation to deal with widespread patterns of discrimination, especially in employment and housing, the lack of confidence among minority groups in the effectiveness of the law or in society's intentions towards them, and a lack of belief that the RRB or Community Relations Commission can do anything to change things. Both the Board and the Commission have been hampered in what they have wanted to do by weaknesses which have become apparent over the years in the legal framework within which they have had to operate.

The third factor prompting the new Act has been the government's aim 'to harmonize the powers and procedures for dealing with sex and race discrimination so as to secure genuine equality of opportunity in both fields'.[2] The provisions of the new Race Relations Act are therefore modelled closely on those of the existing Sex Discrimination Act 1975, which in turn drew heavily on the experience of the 1968 Race Relations Act and was designed to avoid some of the weaknesses revealed, especially in the enforcement provisions of that Act.[3]

Behind these three immediate causes for the change in the law, there can be detected deeper causes for concern which have been equally important spurs to government action. In nearly every speech made in support of the 1968 legislation on its second reading in the Commons, it was stressed that these new race laws were necessary in order to prevent the kind of civil disorders seen in the USA. They were speaking of the Watts, Newark and Detroit rebellions, especially the Detroit rebellion of 1967. MPs obviously felt that if the possibility of legal redress for legitimate grievances was not available, people would sooner or later take things into their own hands. The 1968 Act was undoubtedly seen as one of the ways of heading off the then growing black power movement in Britain. Similar considerations have inspired the new laws of 1976, particularly the need to prevent a repetition of the Asian strikes of 1972-75, and to contain the 'problem' of second-generation black youth.[4]

The Asian strikes took place in industrial situations in which racial discrimination was an essential part. Many were in the textile industry. Either there were discriminatory pay rates, discriminatory work practices, or, as in the Mansfield Hosiery strike, a racially defined promotion structure in which the best jobs were reserved for whites. Very often the discriminatory structure of the industry was matched by discriminatory attitudes by the trade unions involved. Not only were there strikes, but they were often without union backing or were even in direct confrontation with the combined forces of union, management and the elite of white workers. Pleas by Indians for unity with white knitters at Mansfield Hosiery achieved little but the active intervention of the National Front. The result was that strikers were relying on their own communities and ethnic organizations for support rather than the union. This raised the spectre of separate black unions. Secondly, the strikes focussed attention on the fact that legitimate grievances were not being brought within and dealt with by agreed procedures. Thirdly, they suggested a growing lack of confidence among black workers, especially the young, in the ability or the willingness of the trade union movement to represent them. Fourthly, the involvement of the National Front and similar organizations made the possibility of open racial conflict a real one.

The strikes and their aftermath certainly had an effect on the attitudes of the official trade union movement to the question of race. Prior to 1973 there had been lots of fine words of opposition to racialism spoken by unions, but their ostrich-like attitude, when it came to doing anything, was neatly summed up by Vic Feather, the TUC General-Secretary in 1970, when he said: 'The trade union movement is concerned with a man or woman as a worker. The colour of a man's skin has *no relevance* to his work.'[5] Symptomatic of the TUC attitude was the fact that race relations was at that time

handled by the TUC's international committee, though clearly this was a home economic and manpower question. However, since that time the TUC General Council have set up an Equal Rights Committee and a Race Relations Advisory Committee, and have adopted the TUC Model Clause on equality of opportunity and treatment at work to be included in collective agreements.

The setting up of procedures within and between unions to detect discrimination and do something about it is one thing. But the government and RRB have also seen the need to remove the race issue from the industrial scene by giving greater opportunity for legal redress to legitimate grievances. 'The frustration of legitimate expectations', says the RRB, 'particularly if this applies to a significant proportion of the work force, carries a heavy risk of conflict.' 'To fail to provide a remedy against an injustice', says the government in its White Paper, 'strikes at the rule of law. To abandon a whole group of people in society without legal redress against unfair discrimination is to leave them with no option but to find their own redress. It is no longer necessary to recite the immense damage, material as well as moral, which ensues when a minority loses faith in the capacity of social institutions to be impartial and fair.'

Throughout the reports, the speeches, and the literature urging changes in the law, the problem of black youth is always singled out for special mention. The harmful effect of racial discrimination, says the Select Committee,[6] 'is aggravated by growing lack of confidence among the ethnic communities, especially the young — the second generation non-immigrant population... The Commission should concentrate upon, and give priority to, the needs of young persons, particularly West Indians.' The government in its White Paper speaks of the dangers of letting 'the familiar cycle of cumulative disadvantage' trap the second generation in poor jobs and housing. But perhaps the clearest statement on the need to head off the rebellion of young blacks comes from the PEP:

> The first signs of a more profound disillusionment, which might eventually form the basis for a new political force, are to be found among West Indian teenagers, an alarming proportion of whom are unemployed and homeless. The seriousness of these feelings, and the acuteness of the conditions from which they spring, should not be under-estimated...
>
> If the children find that they are unable to realise their parents' ambitions for them, they are liable to become as alienated from their families... as they are from the Mainstream. If they find that the educational system has passed them by, that they cannot get suitable jobs, and that they are not accepted by white teenagers, there will be the profound frustration, bitterness and disorientation

> that is already seen in young West Indians. At present, this frustration does not amount to a cohesive political force. Meanwhile, action to remove causes of injustice can ... be taken ... within the present framework, and without provoking upheaval and conflict. To the extent that action is taken now, political organisation among the minority groups, when it does develop, can be positive and healthy; if present injustices are allowed to continue, political organisation by the minorities, when it comes, is likely to be extremist and destructive.[7]

Aims of the new law

What then are the strategic aims of the new law? Apart from those just discussed, they are set out in the White Paper:

> The Government's proposals are based on a clear recognition of the proposition that the overwhelming majority of the coloured population is here to stay, that a substantial and increasing proportion of that population belongs to this country, and that the time has come for a determined effort by Government, by industry and unions and by ordinary men and women, to ensure fair and equal treatment for all our people, regardless of their race, colour, or national origins. Racial discrimination, and the remediable disadvantages experienced by sections of the community because of their colour or ethnic origins are not only morally unacceptable, not only individual injustices for which there must be remedies, but also a form of economic and social waste which we as a society cannot afford.

The law is capable of dealing not only with individual discriminatory practices, but also with patterns of discrimination which may no longer involve explicit acts of discrimination. To do this it must be comprehensive in its scope. Its enforcement procedures must be capable not only of redressing individual grievances, but also of detecting and eliminating unfair discriminatory practices... In addition to the law the policies and attitudes of central and local government are of critical importance. In particular it is recognized that the new law needs to be supplemented by a more comprehensive strategy for dealing with the related problem of disadvantage.

These lofty aims and sentiments, however, rest upon certain important assumptions. First, it is assumed that the enforcement of the new Act will be effective ... it is doubtful whether many individual victims of discrimination will be able to prove their cases either in the courts or tribunals. Secondly, most of the discrimination which occurs is hidden and indirect, and it is very doubtful if

individuals will have the time, energy or resources to collect the sort of evidence which will be necessary to prove the kinds of indirectly discriminatory practices referred to in S.1(1)(*b*) of the Act. Enforcement here will, therefore, depend on the kind of resources, financial and personal, at the disposal of the new Commission, and how it is prepared to use them. Money is also a prerequisite of the extra-legal measures referred to in the White Paper.

But perhaps the most subversive influence on the success of the new law is the existence of the quite contradictory assumptions of the immigration laws and the kind of racialist propaganda which is associated with them. A race relations law assumes that the black minority are part of the community and are here to stay. An immigration law assumes they are here on sufferance and that if things get bad they should go. A race relations law assumes that the threat to law and order comes from denying the black minority the protection of the law. The immigration laws assume that the black minority are a threat to law and order by their mere presence here. The immigration laws are an outlet for white anger and white racialism. They give a veneer of respectability to the scapegoating of immigrants as the cause of a whole host of social evils. And the point of all the propaganda is that it is always done with reference to those blacks who are already here — even within government, far greater emphasis is placed on maintaining tight immigration controls than on improving race relations. When the present government came into office in 1974 there were, for example, three men in the race relations department of the Home Office compared with 1,500 in the immigration department. The contradiction between the two Acts was summed up by an ex-minister as follows:

> One cannot say to a man who is black 'We shall treat you as an equal member of this society, as a full citizen of our community', and say to him at the same time 'We shall keep your wife and children waiting seven years before they can come and live with you'.[8]

REFERENCES

1 See David Smith, *Racial Disadvantage in Employment* (Political and Economic Planning, 1974); Neil McIntosh and David Smith, *The Extent of Racial Discrimination* (PEP, 1974); David Smith and Anne Whalley, *Racial Minorities and Public Housing* (PEP, 1975); David Smith, *The Facts of Racial Disadvantage* (PEP, 1976)
2 White Paper, *Equality for Women*, Cmnd. 5724 (1975)
3 White Paper, *Racial Discrimination*, Cmnd. 6234 (1975)
4 For a description of these developments, see A. Sivanandan, 'Race, Class and the state: the black experience in Britain', *Race and Class* (Vol. XVII, no 4, 1976), pp.362-6
5 *Guardian* (25 May 1973)
6 Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, Session 1974-1975, *Report on the Organisation of Race Relations Administration*, 448-1, paras 64 and 45.
7 David Smith, *The Facts of Racial Disadvantage*
8 Alex Lyon, MP, *Hansard* (H.C. 24 May 1976), Col 57

Book reviews

Myth, Literature and the African World

By WOLE SOYINKA (London, Cambridge University Press, 1976). 167pp. £4.95

Soyinka's aim in this collection of essays (lectures according to his preface, but in their tautness of thought and expression bearing little trace of the spoken word) is that of 'eliciting the African self-apprehended world in myth and literature'. He ranges over such seemingly disparate topics as the essential nature of the African (more specifically Yoruba) gods, the nature of ritual, of drama, Négritude, the profound influences of Christianity and Islam in African writing and the social concerns of that literature, taking in *en route* Greek drama, the nature of tragedy, the ideas of Jung, the French Surrealist movement and modern western theatre. All this wide scope of information and insight is throughout focussed on his central theme — of elucidating and distinguishing those essential qualities which are common to African culture, and mark out specifically African perceptions of the world. Moreover, as befits a work of criticism, one of whose persistent themes is the centrality of social concerns to African literature, there is a purpose beyond that of erudition for its own sake.

> Nothing in these essays suggests a detailed uniqueness of the African world. Man exists, however, in a comprehensive world of myth, history and mores; in such a total context, the African world, like any other world, is unique ... Like his religious counterpart, the new ideologue has never stopped to consider whether or not the universal verities of his new doctrine are already contained in, or can be elicited from the world view and social structures of his own people. The study of much contemporary African writing reveals that they can...

The exercise is, he claims, of particular importance at this juncture since:

> we are at a definitive stage of African self-liberation ... For after ... an externally directed and conclusive confrontation on the continent must come a reinstatement of the values authentic to that society, modified only by the demands of the contemporary world.

This is by no means an easy book to read ('grapple with' is nearer the reality), and the difficulty arises at a number of levels. First, because most obvious, is the difficulty of the language — academic in the extreme. Always a paradigm, never an illustration, always ontology, never existence, always autogenous, never self begun. I am still not sure of chthonic. And somophoric I could not trace at all. Mr Soyinka's style is highly compressed and demands a strenuous effort from the reader. He never uses two words where one will do — and even that one is likely to be abstruse.

All my difficulties were not resolved, however, by recourse to the dictionary. A more profound difficulty lay at the centre of the book. That was, for someone reared in the Christian tradition, the attempt to grasp a fundamentally different perception of gods and men. It is the gods who are lonely without men, and who need to go in search of them; not man who is lost without God and needs to eschew his earthly desires to be reunited with Him. The worlds of gods and men intermingle — a religious or spiritual or mystical experience is not seen as something isolated from everyday, matter of fact existence. Such a basic outlook, in which the mystical and the mundane are so firmly rooted in each other, obviously has far reaching implications for any understanding of that literature, culture or society. It is an outlook in direct contrast to the (European) 'compartmentalizing habit of thought which periodically selects aspects of human emotion, phenomenal observations, metaphysical intuitions and even scientific deductions and turns them into separatist myths (or "truths")'.

Soyinka follows this line of thinking through in his discussion of the ideology of Négritude, which he claims was based, in the final analysis, on a European tradition of thought. He distinguishes between what he describes as the social vision of Négritude, 'the restitution and reengineering of a racial psyche', and the process of reasoning on which the theory was based, 'the contrivance of a creative ideology'. It is the latter he is most concerned with here.

> Negritude proceeded along the route of oversimplification. Its re-entrenchment of black values was not preceded by any profound effort to enter into this African system of values ... Its reference points took far too much colouring from European ideas even while its Messiahs pronounced themselves fanatically African.

By putting white supremacy at the centre of its argument, however vehemently the argument then opposed that supremacy, it still gave substance to what it denied. It became caught — because of the lack of an equally positive movement to re-establish an intrinsically 'African perception of the world — in primarily a defensive role. Hence:

> Negritude stayed within a pre-set system of Eurocentric intellectual analysis both of man and society ... In the end, even the poetry of celebration for this supposed self-retrieval became indistinguishable from the mainstream of French poetry.

By the breadth of his scholarship, his profound and intimate knowledge of African culture, his familiarity with African and European literature and the quality of intellect which he brings to bear on all this matter, Soyinka forces one to grapple with unfamiliar ideas and ways of thinking — and to look afresh at previously unconsidered accepted commonplaces. A useful, if intensely difficult, exercise. But how many will work through the formidable surface difficulties posed by the book? And would not the attempt to simplify without distortion be a task worthy of Mr Soyinka's intellect and a service to his people — and mine?

Institute of Race Relations HAZEL WATERS

Black South Africa Explodes

By COUNTER INFORMATION SERVICES (London, C.I.S., 1977). 62pp. £0.90

Once again Counter Information Services have lived up to their reputation as a collective of journalists which publishes facts that the established media either does not cover or, of set purpose, suppresses. This time they have issued a comprehensive account of the black uprising in South Africa — an uprising which erupted in June 1976 and whose end is not yet in sight. Considered to be the most widespread and sustained struggle the black South Africans have waged in modern times, the Winter Rebellion has brought the country to the eve of a revolutionary situation.

The publication of *Black South Africa Explodes* is also timely for another reason. The British news media has systematically played down the magnitude of the social upheavals, the number of people killed, injured and imprisoned — partly to allay misgivings among prospective British emigrants to South Africa, which, as J.S. Mill said in another context, has provided a vast system of outdoor relief for the unemployed and distressed classes of the UK.

CIS have compiled their Anti-Report by drawing not merely from South African and western newspapers and magazines. They have secured first-hand reports from student and worker leaders who fled the country during the eruption, and from informants in South Africa itself. The result is a full and authoritative account of the events, from June to December, in all the cities and towns where the people finally resolved to stand up. The Anti-Report also contains vital facts and statistics on the close economic and military ties between South Africa and the West.

The immediate cause of the uprising was the rejection by black students of the apartheid system of education. Gradually they won the workers over to their side, and then staged the biggest strike in South African history. The deep seated reasons for the social upheavals are, of course, more complex, but these the militants of South Africa need to analyse for themselves.

London KEN JORDAAN

Studies on India and Vietnam

By HELEN LAMB (New York, Monthly Review, 1976). 288pp. £8.25

This is really two books. Not only does it deal with two different countries, it investigates a totally different aspect of each country. The pieces on India date mainly from the 1950s, those on Vietnam from the 1960s and 70s. The thread that binds them is the writer's own humane common-sense approach and unpretentious logic.

It would take an economist to do full justice to the series of essays and reviews dealing with India's business communities and with the reasons for India's arrested economic development, resulting in the hybrid economic structure ('neither developed nor undeveloped') it inherited on attaining political independence after two centuries of British colonial rule. But Helen Lamb writes for the layman (or woman). With a welcome absence of technical jargon or rhetoric, she gives an admirably concise yet comprehensive picture of a colonial economy. She describes Britain's laissez-faire passivity to industrial growth in India, in contrast with its activity in building railways and the necessary infrastructure to assist the rapid drain of raw materials to Britain and the supply of manufactured goods back to India; and how the Indian people had to pay not only for the upkeep of the colonial administration or to fill the coffers of British business, but also for Britain's imperial ventures in other parts of the globe and even for expenses like 'the maintenance in Britain of European lunatics returned from India'! She goes into details about the waste of both human and natural resources and the way in which the British colonialists deliberately left the basic social hierarchy intact, whilst

fostering the system of rural money-lending and creating a land-owning class loyal to the British.

In her essays on 'Indian Business Communities' and 'The Indian Merchant', the writer, penetrating little-explored territory, investigates the rise and development and the present structure of business activity in India. She explains the almost exclusive limitation of trade and commerce to a few castes and communities, their later conflicts (and their collaboration) with the British and how they eventually found their niche in the colonial economy. She describes the relations of big business, in particular, to the independence movement and its reasons for supporting Jawaharlal Nehru's 'socialistic pattern', an 'uneasy compromise' between the various non-communist elements in the independence struggle. It is fascinating to learn that G.D. Birla, head of one of India's most powerful industrialist families which is still among Indira Gandhi's staunchest supporters, saw as far back as the 1950s that the 'socialist pattern was the only way to preserve capitalism'.

These essays were mostly written in the heady days of enthusiasm for newly-won independence and Indian nationalism as represented by J. Nehru and the Indian National Congress; but there is an underlying note of doubt as to whether the proposed 'non-communist non-capitalist' system could really work. By 1962, when the last review in this collection was written, Helen Lamb concludes that 'Indian socialism is, to date, more rhetoric than reality'. Some of the statistical tables and facts may be outdated, but what strikes one is the applicability of what the writer describes to India now, after thirty years of Congress-style 'socialism'. Family concerns like the Tatas and Birlas still control large sections of industry, banking, transport and the press, big business still has a voice in parliament out of all proportion to its numbers, basic land-owning relations have remained intact and the money-lender still holds sway in the rural areas. Had Helen Lamb written about India now, she would probably have commented on the rise of the public sector and the Indian bureaucrat, and on the continuing role of foreign investment and 'aid' in India's economy. Her essays are an excellent introduction to the basic economy of post-Raj India. Somebody should follow them up in equally concise and comprehensible style with an analysis of Indian economic development in the 1960s and 70s.

The section on Vietnam is short and deals entirely with aspects of the war that ended only two years ago, but already seems like ancient history, such is the power of the media to relegate a country to oblivion. The most important essay here is 'The Tragedy of Vietnam', which traces the history of the war and, appealing not to political ideals, morality or religion but to plain common sense, powerfully demolishes all the US administration's arguments for staying involved in Vietnam.

These courageous, unblinkered and totally honest letters, articles and reviews gain significance from having been written, for the most part, at a time when the anti-war movement was hardly on its feet. Helen Lamb writes not as an ideologue but as a person who genuinely believes in a nation's right to decide its own social system, and she systematically exposes the US Government's denial of that right. For her, the Vietnamese people's ultimate victory must have come as no surprise: she understood, right from the beginning that they had every reason to fight and none at all to capitulate. Of course, it would have been too much to expect the Johnson administration and its apologists to listen to such a calm voice of reason. They learned the hard way. People like them always will.

London MARY TYLER

The Pike Report

Introduced by PHIL AGEE (Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 1977). 284pp. £2.25

CIA and the labour movement

By FRED HIRSCH and RICHARD FLETCHER (Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 1977). 71pp. 95p

The aim of the CIA's worldwide intelligence-gathering operation is not simply to provide information for the US military, foreign policy-makers and multinationals. The agency was created to serve US imperialist interests and to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries, both to defend the West against 'communism' and to ensure favourable conditions for US commerce. This policy of intervention, termed 'covert action', was defined by the US Senate Committee as 'the use of secret power and persuasion'. It was this aspect of the CIA's work which led to the Church Committee inquiry in the Senate, and the Pike Committee in the House of Representatives. Their findings are now on the public record for all to see, and their significance should not be underestimated. As Agee writes in his introduction, the Pike Committee Report is a 'document of truly historic significance not only for Americans but also for the peoples of the world over who have suffered from clandestine American intervention'.

The Pike Report, which was leaked by an unknown person to the New York paper *Village Voice*, deals with the CIA's covert operations. The most sensitive and costly of these operations were referred to the 'Forty Committee' (then under Kissinger) for approval. Nearly a third of the Forty Committee's approvals were for interventions in the 'free electoral processes' of other countries. For example,

the CIA has spent $75m in Italian election campaigns since 1948. Most of this money went to the Christian Democrats, but $800,000 was given to the neo-fascist movement in 1972 on the instructions of the US ambassador in Rome 'to demonstrate our solidarity in the long pull'. The Forty Committee also approved of media and propaganda campaigns (29 per cent of the total); secret support for paramilitary operations (23 per cent), and for funding civic, professional and trade union organizations.

Two operations examined in depth by the Pike Committee were the paramilitary support given to the Kurdish rebellion at the request of the Shah of Iran in 1972 (this aid was abruptly cut off when Iran and Iraq settled their difference over the border), and CIA support for the FNLA and UNITA in Angola. The Report's findings suggest that the Soviet and Cuban presence in Angola was in large measure a direct response to the CIA's prior intervention.

CIA and the labour movement looks at an area not covered by the Pike Committee: the infiltration of the labour movements in Latin America and Europe. In the first essay, prepared for the Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Repression in Latin America, Fred Hirsch points out that the strategy of the CIA was based on the premise that 'the destiny of nations can be determined by the organised working class'. For if all wealth is created by labour, then labour's politics (and its political parties) present a constant threat to capitalist interests. Yet once exposed, CIA front organizations are useless; hence Hirsch's aim is to bring home to US trade unionists what is being done in their name by their union bosses in the AFL-CIO.

The AFL-CIO's International Affairs Department set up the American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD) in the 1950s. The AIFLD in turn operated through the regional offices of International Trade Secretariats (ITSs) in Latin America to pick out key union leaders for its educational programmes (ITSs are based on single industry unions, like communications, workers and transport workers). More than 200,000 trade union leaders from Latin America took part in AIFLD-sponsored training programmes between 1950 and 1970. These programmes were geared to educating union leaders in the ways of 'democracy' (US-style) and to spotting potential agents. Nine thousand of these were from Chile, where they were directly instrumental in the creation of the professional unions that played such a large part in Allende's overthrow. The funds for this operation were supplied by the CIA and the State Department, and ninety-five multinationals also gave their support.

The second essay, by Richard Fletcher, looks at the CIA's post-war operations in Europe. In a divided continent the CIA directed its operations to supporting pro-western figures in the labour movements, social-democratic parties, student and youth politics. These initiatives were partly funded by re-directing Marshall Aid repay-

ments to bodies like the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its offshoots such as *Encounter* (CCF was exposed as a CIA front organization by *Ramparts* magazine in 1967). The most relevant lesson for those in Britain is the section concerning key figures in the British Labour Party. Anthony Crosland, the late Foreign Secretary, and Denis Healey, the Chancellor of the Exechequer, were both active in writing for, and promoting, magazines and organizations funded by the CCF. That they may not have known the origin of the funds is irrelevant, but as part of the Gaitskellite right of the Labour Party — with its intervention in favour of Britain's continuing commitment to NATO and entry into the Common Market — their politics made them prime targets for the CIA.

Together these two books present us with more than a damning indictment of the CIA. They are important tools for liberation movements and progressive groups to read, learn from and to use to counter the CIA's work.

London TONY BUNYAN

The Rights and Wrongs of Women

Edited and introduced by JULIET MITCHELL and ANN OAKLEY (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976). £1.25 438pp.

A collection of scholarly essays on the position of women is presented within the context of a somewhat controversial editorial introduction. The editors accuse the women's movement of inflexibility, with its entrenched equation of the personal and the political; they view 'sisterhood' as pure rhetoric, serving to mask the real absence of unity between women. Acting on their critique of current feminism, they offer the papers as part of a necessary 'return to the drawing board'.

I agree that we cannot go on talking about our oppression for ever, and must move on to rigorous theorizing and research, but I would argue that the notion of 'sisterhood' does not necessarily act as a hindrance to such work. Such a notion can give women a confidence that they are normally denied, and is no less relevant to the male-dominated academic settings from which most of these papers have sprung. Further, I find it both negative *and* incorrect to see the women's movement as having somehow ossified. The women's movement, by its very nature, is unstructured and open, permitting a wide range of ideologies and politics to fall under its rubric.

That being said, I should add that although few of the essays give us little that is new, there are several excellent historical papers which are on the whole well-researched and detailed. I particularly enjoyed Margaret Walters' perceptive analysis of the works and lives

of Wollstonecraft, Martineau and de Beauvoir. Despite the different historical periods, all these women were 'fighting essentially the same battle': from the same bourgeois feminist tradition, they were all attempting to escape from stifling 'femininity', yet unable fully to confront it within themselves.

Sally Alexander's paper on women's work in nineteenth-century London is one of the most impressive in terms of detailed research. Women were excluded from the professions and from most skilled work, and were mainly to be found in a numerous variety of slop-work and sweated trades. Despite transformations in the labour process, sexual division of labour was rigidly maintained in each occupation throughout the Industrial Revolution. Women formed the basis of a reserve of cheap, unskilled labour, brought in at certain periods to aid the de-skilling required by capitalist production. (Links could have been made here with Dorothy Thompson's outline of women's involvement in nineteenth-century radical politics.) Working-class women played an important role in Chartism, but by the middle of the century they appear to have withdrawn from public activity, largely due to the growth of skilled workers' organizations (trade unions, political pressure groups, cooperative societies) which left behind the mass politics of the unskilled of women. What is not made clear is that such organizations arose partly in resistance to the de-skilling process.

Ann Oakley offers another fascinating historical paper in her account of how men usurped control of medical and reproductive care. In Europe, from the fourteenth century on, the growth of a church-controlled, male 'professionalization' in medicine (which in fact was far more superstitious and irrational than the 'wisewomen's' methods of treatment) demanded the suppression of these female healers. Such women not only challenged the Church and male supremacy, but, as part of a lay peasant subculture, they also represented a potential threat to the ruling landed classes. Nevertheless, women retained control over midwifery well into the nineteenth century, partly due to the male view of childbirth as 'women's business' and somehow polluting, and partly to the equation of midwifery and surgery (the latter being seen as distinct from, and inferior to, medicine). The importance of the paper lies in the historical background it gives to women's present fight to control their own fertility — a battle that repeats history in the confrontation today between male professional medicine and women's lay, self-help health groups. As Ann Oakley rightly points out, 'a repossession of female control over reproductive care is the basic prerequisite for all other freedoms'.

Despite the fact that the papers are 'written from the perspectives of various academic disciplines', they are all accessible and jargon free (with the exception of J. Goode's 'Women and the Literary Text',

which I found interesting but extremely difficult). It's a pity, though, that the links between the various essays and themes are not brought out more clearly. Although the writers hold diverse positions, insights gained from certain papers raise questions in relation to, and shed light on, others. All such interconnections must be further developed and analysed if we are to widen our overall picture of women's oppression and add to our existing body of theory.

London LUCY BLAND

Internal Combustion. The Races in Detroit, 1915-1926

By DAVID ALLAN LEVINE (Westport & London, Greenwood Press, 1976). 234pp. £10.95

Levine has written a most readable account of race relations in Detroit in the early decades of this century. As befits a historian, his handling of primary data is sure and concise; indeed the scholarly footnoted references suggest that there is much more data to be culled from the public and private documents he has used.

Of particular interest to the sociologist concerned with social movements is Levine's treatment of the Detroit Urban League Board in its formative years and the fledgling activities of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. In both cases biographical details of prominent individuals, committee minutes, propaganda documents and leaflets, etc., are used to good effect, apparently for the first time in published form.

Levine is also suggestive rather than exhaustive in his approach to the Americanization Movement of this period. It is true that the state- and privately-sponsored initiatives were more centrally concerned with resocializing the mass of European immigrant peasants into the American way of life. The 'Americanization' or, more properly, the urbanization of the rural, Southern, black migrant sharecroppers in search of factory wages and urban security was largely left to the established black leadership, operating through such organizations as the Dress Well Club ('Don't loaf. Get a job at once.' 'Don't allow your women folks to go around the streets in bungalow aprons and boudoir caps if you want white people to respect them.'), the Young Negroes Progressive Association and the Urban League itself. Levine's account of this complex of organizations and social processes, all aimed at adapting the Southern newcomers to city life, is excellent, each paragraph suggesting the basis for a monograph in itself. Although the Black Muslims and Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association have been well documented elsewhere, both make brief entrances on the stage here. But it is the Urban League which justifiably receives most attention.

The League's employment exchange played a role in attracting and retaining a steady supply of Southern black labour for Detroit's expanding industry, and, it must be remembered, there were times when this supply seemed threatened. In return the Employers' Association helped to finance the League.

The chapters in which Levine analyses the disintegration of partisan politics in Detroit government may confuse the non-specialist or the non-American reader. Nevertheless, this does not detract from Levine's presentation of the realignment of political forces in the city, and especially of the intervention of the Ku Klux Klan in city politics. The relationship between organized politics of the right and centre and the socio-economic conditions of a major industrial city in the throes of creating itself comes through clearly.

Housing and not employment, however, was the milieu in which black and white were to come into conflict. There was never enough to cope with the demand, and racially discriminatory practices, institutionalized in the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Real Estate Boards to which the all-white Detroit Real Estate Board subscribed, resulted in the creation of white reservations: non-whites were excluded from whole tracts of new housing, thus exacerbating pressure on housing in the central, black areas of the city. Detroit's internal combustion may have been working smoothly in the big automobile plants under the repressive, punitive guidance of Henry Ford and John Lee, head of the Ford company's Sociological Department (sic.), but in the housing market there were distinct signs of overheating.

Violence erupted in June 1925 over the maintenance of racial status when a black man, Dr Ossian Sweet, a young, well travelled, highly educated surgeon and physician, bought a house in a white working-class district. Sweet's move was resisted by white mobs. A white man was killed and Sweet and his black lodgers arrested and charged with murder. The NAACP hired Clarence Darrow for the defence. The chapter devoted to the trials and their backgrounds, often based on NAACP minutes and contemporary press accounts, is written in that suspenseful, unacademic style reminiscent of 'Kojak' at its best: a fine conclusion to the more scholarly, statistically based earlier chapters.

Detroit in 1925 may not have been as bloody or as savage as East St Louis in 1917, nor as it was to be again nearer our own time. But Levine has done a fine service in presenting his material in a sober yet interesting way.

Sheffield City Polytechnic STUART BENTLEY

Class in a Capitalist Society: a study of contemporary Britain

By JOHN WESTERGAARD and HENRIETTA RESLER (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976). 432pp. £1.50

Not 'a catalogue of facts' about class inequality, but a presentation of facts 'within a perspective which sets criteria of relevance' — i.e., a marxist perspective — is how Westergaard and Resler like to describe the aim of their work. The achievement, alas, belies the promise, for all that the book is is a catalogue of facts — facts about 'inequalities of Condition and Security', 'Inequality of Power', 'Inequalities of Opportunity'. And within these sections, they marshall a whole plethora of information on income differentials between manual and non-manual workers, differences in direct and indirect taxation, concentration of property and wealth, the size of giant corporations, the extent of government expenditure and even the nature of social mobility and divisions within the working class. But apart from a final section on working-class responses to inequality, which even includes a chapter hopefully headed 'From class in itself to class for itself ...', the only marxist thing about the book is the authors' intentions. Which is not to say, however, that the facts that Westergaard and Resler have put together would not prove invaluable to researchers (marxist and otherwise) in related areas.

The key perhaps to the shortfall between aim and achievement is to be found in the first chapter ('Themes and Issues'), in which they discuss various bourgeois interpretations of class inequality in capitalist society. Here they attack certain recent developments in marxist theory which 'have led to an indiscriminate castigation ... of all factual inquiry as "mindless empiricism".' (To whom precisely Westergaard and Resler refer is left to the readers' imagination, though one assumes that the writers are connected with or at least influenced by Althusser.) Their suggestions, though, do not end here; they also argue that what is needed today is a 'face-on confrontation with post-capitalist analysis' by marxist writers 'using *hard facts* as ammunition' (my italics). Apart from the fact that facts by themselves do not add up to a truth — and what distinguishes a hard fact from a soft? — the truth is that bourgeois interpretations of present-day capitalism cannot be countered by large doses of fact. The only way of revealing the opaqueness of these accounts is to produce a perceptive analysis based on the theory of class struggle.

An example of their failure to do so is contained in the chapter on 'Women in the labour market'. 'Female employment', we are told, 'has increased very little during this century, until quite recently', and the most significant increase has occurred amongst married women. We are also given tables of relative earnings of women in various occupational groups and comparative statistics on male and female earnings. Westergaard and Resler complete their account by

concluding that 'class differences ... are accentuated by the heavy incidence of sex discrimination ... [and that] ... there is no neutralisation or contradiction here of one form of inequality by another; the two are linked'. What is absent from their account is any attempt to explain why women, and especially married women, have been increasingly in recent years drawn into employment. To understand the significance of this increase, it is necessary to consider their importance to capitalism, first, as a cheap labour force and secondly, as a sector of the reserve army of labour. From a consideration of these factors one might be in a position to connect growing female employment with falling rates of profit or to examine the use of female labour as a device to create further divisions within the working class.

Because Westergaard and Resler make no attempt at interpreting their empirical data within such a marxist perspective, either in this chapter or anywhere else in the book, they fail to make the links between state policy, the crisis in capitalism and the level of the class struggle. In the event, they commit their work to what they themselves had set out to transcend: 'mindless empiricism'.

London GEOFF HUNT

The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925

By HERBERT G. GUTMAN (New York, Pantheon Books, 1976). 664pp. $15.95

This is an illuminating, meticulously researched and thought-provoking study of the development of the Afro-American people. Writing primarily from the perspective of the oppressed rather than of the dominant society, Gutman has successfully challenged the pseudohistory' which has characterized the public and intellectual debate over the position of blacks in American society. To outline the mode of thought he is attacking, Gutman quotes Merton: 'pseudo-facts have a way of inducing pseudoproblems which cannot be solved because matters are not as they purport to be'. Adds Gutman: 'so does pseudohistory'.

This type of history continues to portray blacks, both within and outside slavery, as objects acted upon. Hence blacks were seen as Sambo figures (Elkins) or slotted into the Protestant ethic as self-directed workers (Fogel and Engerman), or in their dependency on the paternalism of their masters as accepting of the legitimacy of slavery in return for some limited freedom of action (Genovese). Gutman shows the invalidity of these approaches and indicates the political implications of seeing the Afro-American in these terms. He has based his analysis on a detailed study of black behaviour, on the

values such behaviour reflected, on the family, kinship and quasi-kinship systems and child-naming practices of slaves and freedmen and women. He found that:

> The slave domestic arrangements and kin networks that developed in the century prior to emancipation were far more than productive and reproductive conveniences encouraged by owners to maximize income, to maintain social order, to gratify slave sexual and social needs and to satisfy paternalist codes. These arrangements regularly drew upon past slave beliefs and practices, which served as 'pools of available symbolic and material resources.' Young slaves who married and raised families between 1815 and 1860 were the product of a long and often tragic process by which their forebears had adapted to enslavement and developed fragile communities within which these children were socialised. As adults, they were not 'imitating' a family 'model' known only to the owning class. By 1815 and probably much earlier in time, young blacks had themselves been nurtured in such families and protected by surrounding kin networks.

Gutman relates slave beliefs and practices to the objective conditions within which they operated. This inter-relationship is of central importance in understanding the particular forms of family, kinship and quasi-kinship systems which developed, and Gutman addresses himself to the full range of implications for the slaves and for the slave system. For example, he argues that, 'In certain settings, slave family obligations may have strengthened ties to an owner as contrasted with ties to fellow slaves', and that these obligations were a major inhibiting factor on slave flight. But this extended kin network and the Afro-American culture which denied legitimacy to the owners and to the institution of slavery had another possible effect. 'Further study may yet show that the presence of kin and quasi-kin networks within the slave communities over the entire South in the 1840s and the 1850s is an important reason why the slave system remained harsh and coercive.' Once the power which maintained slavery was weakened, by the Civil War, slaves were able to act out their long suppressed values, and over 500,000 slaves fled to the Union lines, many in family groups. These networks and underlying value systems operated so strongly in the post-emancipation period that, despite all the upheaval and economic disruption, the Freedmen's Bureau had to provide material assistance to only about 0.5 per cent of the 4 million or so freed slaves.

When Gutman looks at the position of the black family in the period from the end of the Civil War to the 1920s he finds that the data 'disproves conventional beliefs about the lower-class black family. It did not disintegrate as a consequence of the great migration to northern cities prior to 1930.' During this time 'the typical

Afro-American family was lower-class in status and headed by two parents'.

The major assault on, and devastation of, the black family, therefore, came not from its 'insecure past', its supposed matriarchal character or even in the 'tangle of pathology' that Moynihan had declared they had been caught up in. It came from the Great Depression of the 1930s and from the modern Enclosure Movement which has destroyed the rural labour force and driven rural blacks into cities that offer little but unemployment and insecurity. These are the objective conditions which have caused the suffering of the black community. Studies like Moynihan's *Negro Family*, however, attempt to deny these causes and to deny the strengths of the black community's adaptations to the conditions thrown up by them. They try instead to 'blame the victims' and thereby divert attention from the fundamental reality of the American capitalist system and its effects. And although 'much has changed in the nation's history in the century following general emancipation, ... wealth and commonwealth still remain polar opposites'.

University of Manchester LOUIS KUSHNICK

Cambodia — Starvation and Revolution

By GEORGE C. HILDEBRAND and GARETH PORTER (New York & London, Monthly Review Press, 1976). US $6.95, £3.50.

This brief but powerfully argued and moving book deserves the warmest of welcomes. No revolution in history has had so much calumny heaped upon it as Kampuchea (Cambodia) since its liberation in April 1975. It excited Bernard Levin (*The Times*, 2 February 1977) to some of his most malicious sneers and barbs. The *Sunday Telegraph* (15 August 1976) foamed and frothed in a paroxysm of indignation that the new revolutionary government was prepared to massacre its own people until 'only a few thousand' (sic!) survived.

What lies behind this orchestration of hate and fear? Certainly not concern for the poor of Kampuchea, we may be sure: Hildebrand and Porter document with scrupulous care the real callousness of those now weeping the most copious crocodile tears. We may obtain a clue to the real motivation by looking at the situation in neighbouring Thailand. The swift and thorough-going liberation of Kampuchea sent shivers of alarm through the remaining 'free world' South-east Asian countries and their imperialist paymasters. It exposed the fragility of the reactionary regimes in half-a-dozen other Asian lands. The defensive response, conducted from Washington and Bangkok

(the most immediately threatened capital), was to concoct lurid 'bloodbath' tales, and then to blow them up many times over and blare them out incessantly to all who could be reached.

Events in Thailand since the bloody right-wing generals' coup in October 1976 show how futile the campaign of vilification has been — as, indeed, we would expect when, for the poor of Thailand, their own abject poverty — and the obscenely ostentatious display of wealth by the Thai rich — are incomparably greater realities than horror stories peddled by the bourgeois press. Thai students, labour leaders, progressive politicians, peasant leaders and the like have shown no hesitation in seeking asylum in Laos and Kampuchea, whence to make their way into the powerful Thai guerrilla.

On the alleged mass slaughters in Kampuchea much might be written, but at this stage let it suffice to dismiss the most horrendous 'guesstimates' habitually trotted out in the press. Western sources give a 1969 population figure for Cambodia of 6,700,000, with a growth rate of 2.1 per cent per annum. In March last year (1976), in connection with the elections, it was announced by the new revolutionary government that the population of the country was over 7,700,000. An estimated 800,000 were killed as a result of American aggression in the five years following the CIA coup of 1970. Simple arithmetic rules out of court the wildest morbid fantasies of the reactionary media.

What this valuable new book does is to *prove* from their *deeds* the *real* care and concern the two sides in the Cambodian war had for the people of the war-ravaged country (which could have been spared its awful agony, be it always recalled, had Kissinger not decided in his wisdom to make an example of it *pour encourager les autres*). In the closing years of the war, when Washington was responsible for about one half of the population, the Khmer Rouge for the other, how did the two respectively perform in terms of their responsibilities? The USA gave top priority to importing weapons of mass destruction, further to blast and poison and burn the irrigation works and standing crops of the liberated areas and to spray peasants working in the paddy fields with bullets and anti-personnel bomb pellets. Meanwhile the people of Phnom Penh and its immediate environs (under American control) were allowed to sink into starvation — the little rice that did get in disappearing at once into the black market further to enrich the corrupt.

The Khmer Rouge, on the other hand, despite the barbarous US assault, succeeded in greatly increasing the output of rice and other foodstuffs by introducing improved methods of cultivation, including double-cropping, made possible by a vast extension of the irrigated area. As a result, not only was their zone self-sufficient in food, but it was possible for them to export some rice to Laos and Vietnam to support the people's liberation armed forces, *and* to lay up a reserve

large enough to feed the entire population of the US zone (once liberated) until the first harvest it could produce for its own maintenance became available.

The evacuation of Phnom Penh was not, therefore, an unpremeditated act of savagery (as portrayed in the western press), but a well-thought-out operation to feed its starving people who had been abandoned without stocks of food by the fleeing Americans (and we should remember that the US is the biggest rice-exporting country in the world; incidentally, food ships on the way to Cambodia shortly before its liberation were turned back — showing just how concerned Washington was for the hungry poor of the country*). Actually, Khieu Samphan, the President of Kampuchea, in his doctoral thesis while at the University of Paris had already made an analysis of the economy of Cambodia from which he concluded that some 85 per cent of the capital's (normal peacetime) population was parasitic upon the peasantry and ought to be re-absorbed into productive rural employment. When liberation came the major part of the population of Phnom Penh were peasants who had fled there to avoid US bombing; the Khmer Rouge had planned to have them back in the fields in time for the crucial planting season.

No doubt many *Race & Class* readers find themselves from time to time in argument about Kampuchea. Maybe, until now, most have found themselves unsure of their grounds in defending the new revolutionary government from slander. This new volume should prove invaluable to all such. And it should be given the widest possible distribution: if each of us makes sure it is ordered for his or her local library, that will be an excellent start, for it won't lie idle on the shelves and might thereby reach a surprisingly large and hitherto hostile or indifferent audience. Go to it.

London MALCOLM CALDWELL

My Years in an Indian Prison

By MARY TYLER (London, Gollancz, 1977). 191pp. £5.20

> ... Sukri, a Harijan woman who worked as a lavatory cleaner ... she and her husband had been charged with receiving stolen copper wire.... Normally there would not have been much expense or difficulty involved in getting bail ... but, because of their lack of land or property and the dishonesty of their lawyers, they had spent all their savings and were still in jail.

*As a parting gift to the people of Cambodia, the Americans destroyed the country's sole oil refinery under cover of the Mayaguez 'incident'; this, of course, handicapped food and population distribution and delayed achievement of a domestic fertilizer capacity.

Fifty-year-old Gulabi was, 'like many other prisoners, completely innocent'. Caught harvesting paddy on a landlord's field and unaware of a land dispute, she had been in prison for nearly three years and had still not come to trial by the time Mary Tyler left India — though the rich landlords had long since settled the dispute. Prokash entered jail when he was two days old. His crippled mother still had not been charged five years later. Panno's daughter had become pregnant by the son of the village headman who refused to marry her. Ashamed, Panno had to mitigate the disgrace: she killed her daughter and surrendered to the police.

> Her's was the first of several cases I came across in which murder had been committed either to avenge or to protect the family honour.... Those who killed in this way knew that they would have to spend years in prison, but accepted it as a fair price for having performed their duty.... In all my five years in prison I hardly ever came across any other type of premeditated murder.[1]

Mary Tyler describes the filth, the insanitary conditions, the heat, the discomfort, the brutality and the total corruption of prison life, but rarely in relation to herself. Her foremost concern is always for her fellow prisoners. She is shocked to find that what she considers poor, monotonous and unhealthy prison food is better than that which the other women might have been accustomed to in their villages. Somri 'had never eaten onions or potatoes before coming to jail and had not even heard of common foods like bananas and coconuts'. Mary is continually appalled at the strength of the caste system and the way it is used to justify further the exploitation of the poor, and how even the prisoners allow it to divide them. The caste system operated among the jail staff too. 'Tribal and Harijan warders were nearly always given the more difficult and unpleasant postings within the jail, whereas the so-called "high-caste" Hindus made sure that they were in charge of the hospital, the stores, the dairy' — the places where most profit could be made by the illicit sale of prisoners' rations.

Mary Tyler delineates the corruption at every level of prison life (from the matine and wardresses, jailors and superintendents to the lawyers and judges) which always means the gross exploitation of the poverty and powerlessness of the prisoners.[2] Yet she finds understanding for her immediate captors. Leoni, a young wardress, has been destitute and considers herself fortunate to have landed a government job that gives her security and the means to support her destitute family. But she is tribal, and under threat of dismissal because she refuses to sleep with the Brahman Chief Head Warder who appears to treat this as his right. 'The jailer himself was known to receive regular payments from the inmates', but he in turn hated the visits of ministers and high officials because they asked for money in

return for his keeping that post. And the Chief Warder, congratulated on his promotion to Patna jail, says, 'what do I want with the "top people"? It's the poor I get my money from.'

On the other hand, it was the untouchables, the lowest of the low, who plied Mary with gifts of food from their own portions. 'I was moved', she writes, 'by the generosity and open-heartedness of women who had so little but so unhesitatingly shared whatever they possessed.'

But this is India itself, with all its seized-up contradictions. And that Mary could bring an understanding and a feel for the country and its peoples from the unjust confines of a government cell — and make 'one little room an everywhere' — attests to her deep sense of justice, to her political grasp of the ills that underlie Indian society and to her faith in the Indian masses. Nor does she parade her politics in high flown theory or ponderous analysis — or overstate her anger or her passion. On the contrary, her thinking is direct, her commitment understated and her style simple, almost lyrical at times.

What brought the book alive for me was the fact that it is not just one of information, but the story of Mary Tyler's own growth. It is the story of a white educated girl, from a highly capitalized and technological society, learning to use and develop her ingenuity in a primitive economy; learning to develop her own resources to enliven the barrenness of confinement; learning to live not just as an Asian woman, but choosing to live as a low-caste one; learning the practice of her politics — to live contradictions — learning from her friend Kalpana not to 'pick quarrels with the small fish when the sharks are waiting to devour you'. They decide not to fight for the status of political prisoners as this would alienate them from the other women. Mary makes her diary out of the backs of tea packets and the fly-leaves of library books and her pen out of a stick from the broom. She avoids the garden during menstruation as the prisoners believe this ruins the crops; she succumbs to their exhortations to put vermilion in the parting of her hair so as to make it clear that she is not seeking another husband. She takes on 'polluting' tasks such as washing the soiled clothes of the sick, and helping a low-caste woman in childbirth.

Altogether a remarkable book. But it is not one that you cannot put down; rather, it is your own life that you cannot pick up again — without shame that is.

Institute of Race Relations JENNY BOURNE

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1 See a very similar account in Akhtar Baluch, 'Sister are you still here? diary of a Sindhi woman prisoner', *Race & Class* (Vol. XVIII, no.3, Winter 1977)
2 Ibid.

Just like a Girl: how girls learn to be women

By SUE SHARPE (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976). 328pp. 95p.

This book has received some pretty hostile reactions from reviewers in the 'progressive' press who obviously think that now the Sex Discrimination Act has been passed, they can start expressing the exasperation they have felt all along towards the more 'extreme' elements in women's liberation. 'O.K. You've made your point; we're doing something about it, now why don't you shut up and develop a sense of humour', etc, etc. Black liberation movements in capitalist societies have suffered the same reaction — incorporation at the juridical and institutional level, thus creaming off the more articulate bourgeois elements so that the vast majority of blacks can be safely ignored and patronized. There's a fascinating history yet to be written about the connections between the emancipation of these two groups.

Sue Sharpe began her work as a social psychologist interested in the ways in which working-class girls envisaged their futures as workers and wives. In 1972 she interviewed a group of schoolgirls in four London schools — 149 were English, 51 West Indian and 49 of Asian origin. She asked them about their attitudes to school, parents, teachers and boyfriends, and to marriage, jobs, leisure, femininity, children and relationships. By the time her data had been produced she was already involved in the women's movement and wanted to set these responses in a wider context (rather than simply report the girls' replies). Her book, written clearly and directly, incorporates much of the recent work produced by the women's movement, and should prove useful to anyone involved in teaching.

She begins by examining to what extent mass education has affected the expectations and ambitions of working-class girls and how far differences in ethnic origin affect commitment to school (and education). Most of the English girls found school boring and irrelevant and couldn't wait to get out, whereas the responses of the Asian and West Indian girls was not only that they 'wanted to stay on longer at school but they also expressed more enjoyment and enthusiasm for school than did the English girls. They did not find it boring and irrelevant, and most wanted to stay on into the sixth form to the age of eighteen.' This difference is obviously related, as Sue Sharpe shows, to the stricter home environment of most Asian girls and the greater motivation of both Asian and West Indian girls to move away from being the most oppressed and exploited section of the working class. She also discusses the impact which arranged marriages have on the attitudes of Asian girls, who are relieved of the time-consuming teenage preoccupation with boyfriends and potential marriage partners. But the contradictions of their position soon crowd in on them:

Enthusiasm for education will serve little practical purpose for those girls who will be married soon after leaving school and may not work at all, or who will work until marriage and then have to stay at home.

Work and then marriage is what most of the girls look forward to, and the kind of work they can anticipate is strictly related to the economy's needs in relation to women. The schools teach them domestic skills so that they can service the old and the sick as well as look after the family; they can learn clerical skills so that the vast administrative structures of advanced capitalism can be kept going, or they can take courses in fashion so that the beauty business can continue to boom. The sexual division of labour ensures that these girls will be given no chance to develop skills and aptitudes outside the traditional spheres of female labour, where monotony, low pay and high unemployment predominate.

If they end up believing that marriage and motherhood are preferable to 'horrible jobs for fifty years', which is how one girl described men's lives, it is neither surprising nor unrealistic. The glamour of nursing and secretarial work is wearing thin, and it is this differential work experience which separates the middle-class girl, who at least has a chance of a satisfying job, from most working-class girls. None of them wanted to swop their lives for a boy's, who were only envied for their greater freedom in the family. What the girls seem unaware of is that they will probably end up doing a boring job *and* looking after a home.

The weakest section of the book is the chapter on the sex stereotyping that children absorb from reading primers, comics, love magazines and the media generally. The impact of all these is far more complex than Sue Sharpe acknowledges. Children's comics and teenage magazines are obviously permeated with outdated ideas, snobbery and notions of 'true romance' but they are not as crucial as they once were. Children's shared references are now much more dominated by television programmes, and evaluating the impact of these is far more difficult — we are still struggling to understand the effects and ideological operations of the medium.

Sue Sharpe's book is valuable, both in its own right and as an indication of and stimulus to, the amount of work still to be done in all these areas.

London JEAN McCRINDLE

Health in the third world — studies from Vietnam

Edited by JOAN K. McMICHAEL M.B.Ch.B. (Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 1976). 342pp. £3 paper.

When the DRVN was proclaimed in 1945, it inherited a terrible burden of disease from French colonial rule. Official statistics quoted in Joan McMichael's book indicate that the general mortality rate was 26 per 1,000, the infant mortality rate 300-400 per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality 20 per 1,000 deliveries. Average life expectancy in Vietnam was 32 years. To cope with such massive problems, the DRVN had approximately one hundred trained doctors and forty-seven hospitals for a population of 17 million people. In addition, of course, they had to endure the hardships of continuing struggle, first against the French, and later against the Americans.

The excerpts presented in this book, written largely by people involved in developments at a practical level, describe the way in which the Vietnamese formulated a health policy designed to cope with such problems, while at the same time being consonant with the social and economic conditions of the country. Its main objectives were an emphasis on preventive rather than curative medicine, the building up of a network of rural health services and the combining of both traditional and western medicine to obtain the best from each. The concentration on preventive medicine involved the widespread introduction of clean water and effective sanitation, inoculation of the population against diseases, such as cholera, TB, smallpox and polio, and mass organization against the 'social' diseases of malaria, trachoma and leprosy. The construction of the rural health network was achieved through training local peasants to provide basic medical care within their own communities. Finally, the combining of traditional and western medicine meant that techniques such as acupuncture, or the use of herbal remedies, were re-evaluated on a systematic basis, and those found to be effective were retained as part of the available stock of treatments.

Particularly interesting sections of the book concern the impact of continuous war on medical priorities and organization, the interest in psychiatry and the development of an indigenous pharmaceutical industry. Relentless blanket bombing by the Americans caused huge numbers of casualties and, simultaneously, devastated the hospitals available to treat them. In addition, the savagery of US anti-personnel technology — from napalm to pellet bombs — produced horrific and complex wounds, requiring the development of unique medical specialities by Vietnamese doctors already beset by the massive demands of more characteristic Third World health problems. Yet the socialist objectives of the health services were adhered to despite the constant drain on human and economic resources. It is doubtful whether the medical demands of the long struggle could have been

met without a decentralized, rural health network relying on the ingenuity and commitment of a revolutionary peasantry.

Before the war Vietnam had been a dumping ground for French pharmaceutical products. After 1945 it was left with only a few drugs and barely a dozen trained pharmacists. The Vietnamese were unwilling to import drugs from abroad, and therefore set out to develop their own drug industry, based on both traditional medicinal plants and chemical production where appropriate. Aware of the side-effects of many sophisticated drugs, they used 'natural' extracts wherever possible, having isolated plants with both antibiotic and anti-allergic properties. They have also adapted foreign technology for use under Vietnamese conditions — for example they developed a 'dead' BCG vaccine for TB, since the live one used in the west necessitates refrigeration and expensive medical back-up.

Additionally, the book serves to highlight the inappropriateness of the policies being implemented in parts of the Third World still subject to imperialist domination. However, it is at times too one-dimensional. Written solely by those involved in building the health system, it is descriptive rather than critical; problems which must have occurred during the struggle are dealt with briefly, if at all. For a fuller picture of the health situation in Vietnam, we must await a more critical appraisal of what is an extremely important and heroic experiment in the creation of socialist health policies.

London — LESLEY DOYAL and IMOGEN PENNELL

A Bibliography of Ceylon: volume 3

By H.A.I. GOONETILEKE (Zug (Switzerland), Inter Documentation Company A.G., 1976). (Volumes 1 and 2, 1970) 507pp.

'Not in Goonetileke', wrote Pearson in the foreword to the first volume of this work in 1969, would be the measure of a title's worth 'in a future bookseller's catalogue'. This third volume takes that promise further and Pearson's epithet will soon come to signify that a title 'not in Goonetileke' is strictly one that is not worth consulting. This is not to say that his scope is not entirely without limits — this is not a national bibliography nor was meant to be — but that in the course of some 20,000 entries, Goonetileke has, in addition to recording the substantial literature of his country's history (since 1507), brought to its assessment a scholarship and a skill that refutes other judgments.

It was a daunting task to begin with. Goonetileke was entering into uncharted territory with only his native sensibility for a compass and the craft of his calling for company. There were no systematic bibliographies to guide him, works of reference were few and inadequate,

and the collections in local libraries even when significant had gone uncatalogued and unlisted. Besides, whole areas of the country's literature were scattered throughout the libraries of Europe. Merely to locate the material dispersed by four and a half centuries of colonial rule was itself a formidable undertaking. To record it thereafter in an organized, intelligible and coherent fashion with cross-references and indexes, annotations and lay-out and, not least, a subject classification predicated by the literature itself is an achievement that attests not only to the author's bibliographical skill but to his knowledge and feel for his country.

And it is these qualities — of polymath and patriot — that give this third volume the political edge which the previous ones had only hinted at. From the very outset Goonetileke's work had been motivated by 'an overpowering desire to escape from a situation of cultural dislocation where I found myself ignorant of many aspects of my country's culture and almost a stranger in my own land'. But in the process of handling and examining the literature of colonial Ceylon written largely by colonial masters to serve the colonial purpose, Goonetileke appears to have become increasingly aware that his bibliography should help to free indigenous scholarship from 'academic imperialism' and engender instead a research that spoke to the real needs of his people. So that by the time he gets to the third volume, even his annotations, which according to the rules of the bibliographic game should be impartial and objective, become more trenchant. Of Lerski's *Twilight of Ceylon Trotskyism*, he writes, 'a thin and misinformed analysis ... The author's inability to discern or appreciate the radical directions of the indigenous movements in newly independent Asian countries ... forces him into ready-made anti-Marxist interpretations and inaccurate statements'. And where Sir Percival Griffiths (in *Empire into Commonwealth*) attributes the achievement of Ceylon's independence 'with so little struggle' to British benevolence, Goonetileke suggests that the collusion between the imperialists and their local collaborators was more to the point.

Of course there are faults one can find in the work such as errors of arrangement (Sivanayagam before Sivalingam in the author index) or of references (Lerski 1769 for Lerski 1796). But these are not of great substance. Besides, there are some books you do not review; you are thankful they exist.

Librarian, Institute of Race Relations A. SIVANANDAN

Southern Governors and Civil Rights

By EARL BLACK (New York & London, Harvard University Press, 1976) 408pp. £11.25

Now that the 'New South' has taken over the White House, one might have looked to this type of book to provide some insight into the racial policies which the new administration will follow or the political significance of the Carter victory. All such hopes are in vain.

In reality, this book is not about Southern governors and their policies on civil rights; it is a narrow analysis of Southern gubernatorial elections and the campaign rhetoric of racial segregation over the past twenty years. Even this narrow field would have allowed some scope for an interesting study of changes in racist ideology. Unfortunately, the type of analysis pursued, in which the flavour of campaign rhetoric is buried in an endless series of statistical indices, defeats even this limited purpose. George Wallace, as a flesh and blood politician, is someone I can learn to hate; Jimmy Carter, as a Southern re-incarnation of the New Frontier, is someone I can distrust — as mere statistics, neither of them arouse any passion.

In short, this is a lifeless, gutless, boring book, and the conclusions reached — that explicitly racist campaigning has declined under the impact of social, economic and political change — hardly justifies the sheer effort of wading through its four hundred-odd pages.

University of Birmingham LEE BRIDGES

Books received

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