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CONTRIBUTIONS

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AKHTAR BALUCH

Introduction and Notes by MARY TYLER

'Sister, are you still here?': the diary of a Sindhi woman prisoner

This sincere and moving document, written by a young Sindhi woman student arrested and imprisoned several times during the national movement, is a reminder that the national minority struggles and women's movements taking place on an increasing scale in many parts of the world should not be seen in isolation from the worldwide battle for the total liberation of the human race from exploitation and oppression. Akhtar Baluch's frequent references to struggles in other parts of the world, namely in Vietnam, in Palestine and in China, and her conviction of the need for revolution, demonstrate her awareness of being not only a nationalist, but a part of the world struggle against imperialism. This insight adds considerable value to the important sociological content of her writing. What she presents is a strong argument against those persons who see all national movements as manifestations of the pent-up grudges and self-interest of frustrated sections of the ruling class. Most, though not all, national movements, and particularly those in colonial and semi-colonial countries, even if not aimed at socialist revolution, are contributions to the world struggle against imperialism.

Furthermore, agitations against the economic, cultural and political oppression of minority nationalities, such as the struggle of the Sindhi people for the publication of electoral lists in their own language, and against their exclusion (apart from a few collaborators) from higher official posts and their subjection, like that of the people of Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province, to Punjabi

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MARY TYLER is the author of *My Years in an Indian Prison* (London, Gollancz, forthcoming).

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hegemony, are a training ground for a higher form of struggle. In the course of such agitations, members of the middle classes and even of the national bourgeoisie can become radicalized and prepared for further self-sacrifice in the cause of true liberation. Who can fail to be impressed and inspired by the courageous and self-denying letters of Akhtar Baluch's parents and by her own steadfastness and willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for the cause which she holds dear?

It may be suggested that cultural and national questions are issues affecting only the 'educated' middle classes and are of no relevance to the vast majority of the people of Sind or any other country. But this interpretation negates the attachment felt by every individual to his or her own language, customs and culture. Cultural repression ultimately harms the intellectual development and creativity of peasants and workers as well as other sections of society, and is, without doubt, an additional obstacle on the path to liberation from economic and political oppression.

The diarist is, as she herself admits, a 'city girl', a member of the comparatively privileged urban middle class. As a result of her imprisonment, she is thrown into intimate contact with women from classes she may otherwise scarcely have encountered. Frightened at first by the proximity of 'criminals' and 'murderesses', as she believes them to be, she soon comes to understand that they are but the victims of injustice and tyranny far greater than that for which she has come to prison. She sees very clearly that the cause of their 'crimes' and their ensuing sorrows is not their own wickedness, nor even simply their inferior social status as women; it is the evil remains of the feudal system and the imperialism which it nurtures.

One can only describe as monstrous a society which inflicts upon its women intolerable restrictions and cruelties like those described by Akhtar Baluch. A system which tolerates the marriage of a young child to an 80-year-old man as a type of business contract, allows women to be traded like merchandise, imprisons people for burning the Koran, sentences a 12-year-old girl to death by hanging and sees conversion to Islam (or, for that matter, to any religion) as a salvation or exoneration from guilt, or permits parents to keep their daughters like nuns to satisfy their snobbery, has no place in the twentieth century. It is hardly to be wondered at that women who are subjected to the cruelties of such a system are led to desperate acts such as killing their husbands who they mistakenly see as the main instrument of their oppression and the obstacle to their self-expression.

But it is to the credit of Akhtar Baluch that she does not attribute her fellow-prisoners' miseries to male chauvinism per se; she attacks, not men, but the feudal system. Those of us interested in the women's liberation movement in the West can take a lesson from her. In the words of Samora Machel:

The antagonistic contradiction is not between women and men, but between women and the social order, between all exploited people, both women and men, and the social order ... Therefore, just as there can be no revolution without the liberation of women, the struggle for women's emancipation cannot succeed without the victory of the revolution.

*It is important to stress this aspect, because we now see an ideological offensive taking place, particularly in the capitalist world, in the guise of a women's liberation struggle. The aim is to transform the contradiction with men into an antagonistic one, thereby dividing exploited men and women to prevent them from fighting the exploitative society. In fact, leaving aside the demagoguery which hides its true nature, this ideological offensive is an offensive by capitalism to confuse women, to divert their attention from the real target.**

The prisons described by the writer are, like prisons everywhere, a reflection of the society of which they are a largely unseen part. Pakistan is not the only country where a minority has come to power with promises of independence, democracy and prosperity; but because, by its very class nature, it is unable and unwilling to do anything but resist to the utmost the radical transformation of the economic base, which alone could bring about the fulfilment of those promises, it ends up ruling by deceit, corruption and, when these no longer suffice, by repression and tyranny. The prison system of such a society can be no better than the society itself.

Pakistan and India, which to all appearances have pursued diametrically opposed paths since political independence in 1947, are in fact at different milestones along the same road, with a common destination. The reason is that in neither country was power handed over to those who had been conducting a genuine independence struggle, but instead to a class which, by virtue of social standing, education and ambition, was nearest to the colonial masters and thus, in the eyes of the latter, most suited to carry on where they left off.

And so, apart from a few minor details, the prisons depicted by Akhtar Baluch could as well have been those in which I spent the years from 1970-5 in Bihar, India. The guards and wardresses, themselves victims of oppression, earning a pittance and compelled by sheer economic necessity to work without any feeling of loyalty or conviction, retaliate by exploiting in turn the only people over whom they have any power, the unfortunate prisoners. These are obliged to succumb to the petty tyranny and rapaciousness of their keepers

*From 'The Liberation of Women is a Fundamental Necessity for the Revolution', published in *Mozambique: Sowing the Seeds of Revolution* (London, the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guiné, 1974).

in order to make their lives bearable. Sometimes, unable to tolerate their difficulties any longer, unable to see any solution to their problems and unaware of the root cause, they break out into fights and quarrels with each other. But these incidents soon pass; overall there is a feeling of affection, warmth and mutual help between most prisoners. If one cries, all are sad. If one is condemned, all give succour. If one is happy, all rejoice.

Yet there are divisions among prisoners too. While most ruin their health with insufficient food and hard labour, a small minority prosper by wheedling their way into the favour of the authorities and acting as their agents. As a reward for this betrayal they receive privileged treatment, exemption from labour and the opportunity to exploit their fellow prisoners. They spend their days massaging the wardresses, playing with the Jailer's children, or in total idleness. Just like the labour aristocracy in developed capitalist countries, or the token black men raised to eminence in white racist societies in order to voice the policies of their masters, the prisoner aristocrats are also the paid agents of the oppressors.

What shines, however, through all the injustice and sorrow, is the courage and loyalty displayed by Akhtar's fellow prisoners. It is as if constant exposure to hardship and cruelty has given them an increased inner strength. She rightly recognizes the potential impact of transferring these qualities from individual objectives to the national cause. It is here that the importance of women's organizations comes in. But the aim of such organizations must not be to agitate for the mock masculinity falsely peddled by some in the West as 'liberation'. They will exist to enable women who for centuries have suffered double exploitation, degradation and misuse to realize their full potential as human beings and to play their role, like countless heroic women of this century, in the genuine liberation of humanity.

CENTRAL JAIL HYDERABAD

July 25th, 1970

This afternoon they brought us to the Central Prison. I was taken from the police lock-up at approximately one o'clock, along with five men students. On the way to the Prison I recalled the night of November 19th, 1969, when I went on hunger strike for the first time in support of demands for the publication of the electoral list in Sindhi[1] and for the break-up of the One Unit.[2] I cannot describe how I felt then. Mingled with enthusiasm and joy, there was a little fear as to what it would be like in prison. But today, when I was coming to jail I had no fear or apprehension. I felt as if I was going home.

No sooner had I opened the door of the women's ward than I saw

Sister Farooq.[3] For a moment I was overjoyed with the thought that she was there. But when she came running to me and embraced me, I was reminded of the time that had passed between 1969 and 1970 and I asked her in surprise: 'Sister, are you still here?' Tears came to my eyes and I noticed that she was also wiping away the tears.

Sister Farooq is in jail on the charge of having murdered her husband. She is to be tried by the *Jirga*.[4] She has been here for the last three years waiting for the hearing. I can never forget the services she rendered to us and the care she took of us. She said: 'Akhtar, my trial has still not started. When I asked the jail authorities about it they shut me up by accusing me of all kinds of things. I know my case is before the *Jirga*, an unjust court from which one cannot expect justice. But the uncertainty of not knowing whether I will be convicted or freed is killing me. If one were convicted, one might harden one's heart to pass the time.'

Then I saw little Chhalroo, his mother and aunt. I asked: 'Have your cases also not been decided yet?' Chhalroo has grown up quite a bit. Poor little fellow! Along with his mother he too is undergoing punishment. Now he has got a friend, Ahmed Sher, whose mother and father are both interned on a murder charge.

After having a wash, I looked around the prison: the same dormitory and the same cell, blackened with soot as before; the same buzzing of flies; the same broken door; the same yard; our cot once again under the same tamarind tree because of the heat; the same lonely acacia and tamarind trees on the opposite side. I wondered how these women must be passing their time here. We have a noble cause which gives us courage, but what must they be doing in these ruins?

It is 10.30 at night. This is the second night of our hunger strike. Last night we had not yet been arrested. We were waiting on the Jeeye Sind Square, wondering when they would come and take us away. A loud noise just came from outside. Maybe a warder passed by and the sentry informed him that I am still awake. Poor fellows, for the sake of their bellies they have to keep guard over others like themselves. It is not only the prisoners but also the guards who deserve sympathy.

July 26th, 1970. 11pm

Sister Farooq and some others sang us lots of songs. I have forgotten the rest, but I still remember two lines:

The millet crop, still too young
I am throwing mud balls at crows
Daughters are always destined for strange lands
They are a source of sorrow for their mothers.

Bukho sang that song. I started thinking to myself about how strange the law of Nature is: parents bring up their daughters with so much love and care and then give them way to others, forfeiting any right over them. Especially in Sind do we consider the daughter as a sacrificial lamb and give her away to anyone we please. On the other hand, some are confined completely to the house. Some are forced to forsake their right to marriage, while others are wedded to the Koran.[5] The *Meers, Peers*, landlords and *Sayeds*[6] in our land themselves marry countless times, legally and illegally, but they consider it sinful for their daughters and sisters to marry. They say: 'How can we give away our daughters? It is degrading.'

I thought about a friend of mine. Her family is highly educated, advanced in every respect and very rich. But there are seven sisters, and none is married yet. In the beginning, whenever a proposal came, their parents would answer: 'Do you expect us to give away our daughters? God has given us everything. Let them rest, travel and eat.' Finally, there was a hue and cry, and the parents thought of marrying their daughters. However, by then the news had spread that these people don't want to give their daughters in marriage, and if one goes with a proposal they abuse the proposer. So no-one dares to approach them. One day I said to my friend: 'Tell me, I heard that you are going to get married?' She began to cry. 'There are five sisters older than I. They haven't been married yet. My turn is still far off, by then I might be an old woman.' God knows when these centuries-old traditions, customs and practices will end. When will these cruelties end?

It is the third night of our hunger strike. We consume only tea. Naseem has become somewhat weak. There is no news of the outside world. We don't get any newspapers and there is no book to read. But sometimes, when we hear the male students shouting slogans, we are reminded of this verse of Ayaz[7]:

> Still the cry is coming from the desert,
> it is coming
> Don't think that all the peacocks have died.

July 27th, 1970. 9pm

Naseem is sitting near me talking to the old wardress in her mother tongue, Siraiki. How happy she is feeling to have met someone with the same mother tongue as hers. How dear everyone holds his or her own language! Bibi and Zainab are supplicating a hundred thousand times for their freedom. Bukho is singing a lullaby in Punjabi to little Ahmed Sher. Chhalroo is swinging on the feet of his mother, who is singing the Sindhi folk song which I taught her. The Sikh woman who arrived when we did is rocking in her cot. Rashida is lying straight as

usual and talking to herself. Poor young girl. She is mentally ill. She and her mother were jailed for having allegedly burnt the Holy Koran.

Today I got news from home, an account of what is going on in the world and about the movement. Ada[8] has written:

> Zerena![9],
>
> ... Nature has made our life such that we can neither be kind to ourselves nor help our near and dear ones. If one softens one's heart, then how can one avenge the oppression inflicted upon one's nation and on humanity? If one begins to take pity on one's own near and dear ones then one may not be able to work for the nation. One can cure the pains of the nation, of the oppressed people and of painstricken humanity only if one is able to be indifferent — or, rather, harsh — to oneself and to one's own. For so many centuries there has been no contest with our system of oppression. That is a historical debt. That debt will be repaid by sweat and tears, by bearing hardships and by giving blood — or, rather, life. It will be paid by the sweat, tears, cries and sacrifices of lives of big and small people like you and me ...
>
> I have to be ready for the eventuality that I might have to sacrifice my own life at any moment without notice. Therefore, you should not be surprised if I prepare myself to hear the heart-breaking and terrible news of your death.
>
> Always with you,
> 'R'
> 1am

July 28th, 1970. 10pm

This is the fifth night of our hunger strike. I have been feeling weak ever since I got up this morning. The doctor came today, as if he hadn't known for so many days that we were on hunger strike, although all the wardresses had reported about us. The doctor told us that our hunger strike was illegal. We said: 'We know the law better than you and we don't accept any of your laws. Therefore, whether it is legal or illegal, we are on hunger strike.'

July 29th, 1970. Approximately 10pm

Today is the sixth day. Now my head is spinning. Sometimes I feel so hungry that I think about green peppers and Ziarat bread. The hunger dies down when we drink tea. We have been lying on the bed since morning. I didn't feel like getting up to wash. The women chant *daroods* and *salvats*,[10] and supplicate a hundred thousand times, the whole day long. Whenever a crow comes and sits on the wall or on a tree, they say: 'Oh, black crow! When will we be freed? Oh,

black crow! Bring the letter of my release.' They have passed so much time giving messages to the crows.[11] God knows whether the crows are deaf or simply don't understand, so that they have neither been released nor do they get any letters.

Today I received a letter from Ada. He writes:

> ... There come many occasions in one's life when, in response to the situation, one has to forget one's status, and make oneself small, unknown and insignificant. But sometimes the exigencies of the national, class and historical objectives demand that one should become bigger than oneself — as big as the situation demands. And not only bigger than oneself, but braver, more courageous, more hardworking, more patient, and more dignified. Now that time has come — especially for you.
>
> 'R'

July 30th, 1970. 9.30pm

A little while ago the boys were raising the slogans of *Jeeye Sind*.[12] The seventh night has begun. My head was spinning as I got up this morning. Naseem has become very weak. I too am getting weaker. Just now Bibi and Zainab have started teasing Rashida. Poor sick girl is like a plaything for them. These poor women too have to entertain themselves. Rashida is yelling. Now she has started praying on the bare floor. But what kind of prayer is this? She has joined her hands and is shouting loudly: 'Rashida is calling his Highness the Meer. His Highess the Meer should immediately come to Rashida.' What is she saying? Who could he be? Maybe they do know someone, because they used to be very rich. Rashida's father was an engineer, and her mother tells us all the time the stories of her riches, and that the British gave them lands and orchards and that they went to Iran and to Baghdad. She mentions food that I had never heard of before. Even now they don't like the jail food. Their soiled clothes are ragged and torn, but they won't wash them in caustic soda. They won't put the prison oil on their hair, won't wash their faces with detergent soap. When we tell them that this is a prison and you have to make do with things, they list the names of English soaps without which they will not wash their faces, because their complexion will be spoiled. This class is the enemy of the Sindhi people. They have received the lands and orchards of the poor labouring people of Sind as a reward for their slavish services to the British, so that they could live a luxurious life, visit foreign lands, reside in mansions, eat all kinds of feasts and wear silk and precious cloth when the real heirs to these lands, properties, mansions and jobs do not have enough to fill their bellies. They don't have clothes to cover their naked bodies, let alone having any creature comforts. Well, the days of the humble

and poor will also come, and the oppressors who have sucked the blood of the poor for centuries will be asked to account for it. Rashida has cracked up in jail because of this shock. On the one hand, soft silken beds, mansions and sumptuous meals; on the other, prison, a broken cot and watery dal!

July 31st, 1970. 10.15pm

Today after reading the verses of Shah,[13] I thought to myself that we are even softer than wax. We haven't seen any hardships. What are we city girls? We are only preoccupied with eating tasty snacks, wearing new fashions and going to the cinema. Then there are girls in China, Vietnam and Palestine who, in defence of their motherland, are facing bullets. How small we are in comparison with them! We do not have an iota of their beauty, sincerity and greatness. I received a letter from Mother. She says:

> Dear daughter Akhtar and Naseem,
> *Jeeye Sind!*
> I hope you will be steadfast and keep to your word. Life is the name of hardships. When you pass through these sufferings and difficulties, you will learn to appreciate how many troubles and sorrows mankind is bearing. You have gladly accepted these hardships for the sake of your nation and for your country. Therefore you should undergo them cheerfully ...
>
> Your mother

August 1st, 1970. 9.30pm

The ninth night of our hunger strike has begun. We still have the courage to keep going. Last night they told the male students to move to another ward, which they refused to do. Thereupon the Medical Officer, the Superintendent, the Police Inspector and two Jailers beat them severely. We felt very sorry for them. I am also sorry for the Superintendent. Pir Saheb, who, despite the legendary Sindhi blood in his veins, himself had the sons of Sind beaten — for the sake of his petty rank and job. Well, we have vowed to bear these hardships, beatings and starvation. But the Sindhi people will never forgive these traitors.

August 2nd, 1970. 12 midnight

I received a letter from Mother today. She has written:

Dear Daughters Zeena and Naseem,
Jeeye Sind!

> ... Life and Death are in the hands of Nature. Even if you die, so what? You'll gain eternal life. Every day hundreds of thousands of people die without any cause. Wouldn't you die, sitting at home?
> Your mother

August 3rd, 1970. 11pm

The jail doctor said today: 'You are committing a crime. You'd better call off your hunger strike, otherwise I'll forcibly put you in separate cells in the prison hospital and break your fast by making the male prisoners force feed you.' We told him: 'We are ready to bear any hardship or insult.'

August 4th, 1970. 8pm

Now I cannot even sit. Mother sent me this letter today:

> ... Probably I will come and visit you tomorrow. But I don't really feel like it, because the attitude of the prison authorities is not good. They keep you waiting all day and then refuse you ...
> Your mother

August 6th, 1970. 9.30pm

This morning we literally crawled out of our beds. Today they took us and five male students who were arrested with us to Major Sher Afzal's military court ... the Major read out the charges and told us: 'you have been arrested on the charge of having violated the law.' Then two policemen and an inspector testified against us that we had gone on hunger strike. One of the constables was lying, because we have never seen him before. But there was no need to deny the charge. The Major asked us: 'Is this charge correct? And are the witnesses telling the truth?' One by one we all said 'Yes'. They gave us a form to fill in, stating that we had indeed gone on hunger strike. Our demands were 'Drop the fake charges against Dr Afghan. Free him, Fazil Rahu, Hafeez Quraishi, Dr Kamil and other peasant and nationalist militants. Stop issuing domicile certificates to fake people,' etc. Then the Major stamped the file and said: 'All right, you have admitted it yourselves. Therefore, you will definitely be punished. But now tell me. You are all educated people and you know that in Islam it is a sin to go on hunger strike. It is in the tradition of Gandhi. Why then did you do such a bad thing?' I replied: 'You are powerful, you have armies, weapons, prisons, police, in other words, every weapon to oppress us. What have we got? By what method can we demand our rights from you? How shall we fight

against the cruelties you inflict upon us? At this stage, hunger strikes, demonstrations, rallies and processions are our weapons, and so they are in anybody's tradition.' Then he looked at Naseem and said: 'She is a very little girl. She must have been forced to join the hunger strike.' Naseem replied: 'I am not so little as not to understand what is going on. I went on hunger strike of my own free will.' Then he turned towards me and said: 'If you were employed to teach children, what would you teach them?' I said: 'First of all, I would teach them to hate oppression and to love the oppressed.' He said: 'Then our children will be ruined.' ... Each one of us was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, and Naseem and I were fined five thousand rupees each. Then we returned to jail. This evening we learned that the Martial Law authorities have decided to prosecute Dr Afghan in a Civil Court, instead of the Military Court. Therefore, in response to the appeal of the Sindhi people's movement and other national cadres we ended our hunger strike this evening.

August 7th, 1970. 9.30pm

This is our sixteenth night in prison. Two men are going to be hanged tomorrow at dawn. People say that one of them had a love affair with a girl, because of which he committed murder. I really feel like crying. It is the last night in the life of these poor men. They know that at dawn they'll depart from this world for ever ... Anyway, the only remedy for these sorrows and miseries is revolution. Ayaz has said:

> Shake up this society, jolt the imperialists,
> Build some new system, which the people may say is good
> This system is bad
> Revolution! revolution! revolution!

Ada is right when he says that instead of sympathizing with an individual and spending one's entire energy on him, one should follow such a path and engage in such a struggle as to lead to the emancipation of the entire nation from such sorrows.

CENTRAL JAIL, SUKKUR

(The writer describes how she and Naseem are moved to Sukkur, a jail reserved mainly for those who have been convicted. There are 45-50 female inmates, most of whom are Sindhis and have been sentenced on murder charges. At first, finding themselves among 'murderesses', the girls are terrified, but soon realize that they have no need to be afraid. They are denied 'B' class, the category usually granted to political prisoners, and allotted the 'C' classification given to

criminals, which also compels them to work along with the other women.)

August 10th, 1970. 10pm

It was Monday today. In the C class, each woman took her own cot inside and started working. But there are some women who do not work. They started dressing up and beautifying themselves early in the morning. By about eight o'clock the women had finished their breakfast and their cleaning jobs. The wardress shouted: 'Women, come on, line up.' The women sat in a row on the verandah in front of the dormitory. Some were operating spinning wheels, some doing embroidery, some making trouser cords. We also sat down quietly with them. But one thing seemed strange to me: why did everyone not sit in the row? Apart from those who work in the kitchen and the nurse and cleaner of the infirmary, there are still so many others who were milling around. I thought to myself, 'God knows what kind of rule it is that some work and others just hang about.' At about 8.30, the Miss [the female Jailer] arrived. She said: 'I'll put you on embroidery. Learn from the other women.' We agreed, and they gave us some cloth; we started learning from the inmates. The three or four prisoners who were sitting near Miss massaged her turn by turn, while some played with her children.

The mosquitoes won't let me rest. My face and arms have swollen up.

August 11th, 1970. 10pm

A little while ago the women decided to sing, but the prisoner-guard and the wardress didn't let them. Today we somehow felt at home. We chatted with a few women prisoners ...

This morning they brought four male students from Hyderabad. They started shouting slogans as soon as they arrived. In the evening, some women came to us and said 'You are literate. Read us something.' We read *Sur Maruee*[14] to them. On hearing the verses, some of them were sighing, some were wiping their eyes and noses. When I read this stanza:

> No one came: no one came: not a single soul came:
> Not one of the camelherds came.
> Of my brothers, not one took the trouble to come.
> Who will carry and tell me their news?

they burst into tears, and made me cry too. I couldn't read on, and returned to the office, where I kept thinking about these women for hours: they have such long sentences. How will they pass the time? Why did they commit murders? Or maybe there is an explanation:

the blame rests entirely with the feudal system and its dirty and cruel customs and practices, which have strangulated and killed living human beings.

August 12th, 1970. 9.45pm

I came back a while ago after hearing songs from Kuzbano. This fair, broad-faced, beautiful and plumpish Khoso woman has been sentenced to death by hanging. She has filed an appeal, but as yet there has been no decision. Winter or summer, she is confined 24 hours to her cell. In the evening, the other women gather in front of her cell and listen to her songs, or sing to her. I asked her, 'Why did you kill your husband?' She said, 'I fell in love with another man.' Then she said, 'Together with the two of us, my uncle has also been sentenced to hang. He is absolutely innocent.' She continued, 'If they let me go now, I would never do a thing like that again in my life. If they can't release me, they should sentence me to twenty years. They should not hang me.' I wish I had the power to set her free.

August 13th, 1970. 12 midnight

Today it is extremely hot. On top of that there is a swarm of mosquitoes. Mother Mehlan's son Ali Khan is still crying in the dormitory. Under-trial prisoners are not allowed to sleep outside in summer. This is the second year of Mother Mehlan's trial. She is fortyish. She has been charged with murdering her husband. She says, 'I didn't kill him. We were seated in an ox cart. The cart upturned. I also received injuries, but my husband was very old, so he died instantly. My brothers-in-law falsely accused me.' The police arrested a cowherd who was passing by. This boy is hardly fourteen or fifteen years old. They have built up a case that 'the woman had an affair with this boy, that's why she killed her husband by pushing him from the cart'. Mother Mehlan has a beautiful voice. Sometimes at night when she sings a lullaby to her son, it reverberates like an echo in the whole jail.

I can hear the sound of the pumping of water. The women are still bathing. It's good that we have that well. The water comes out of the ground, so it is as cold as ice. Hardly any of the prisoners wears a tunic, because the cloth is so thick that it could not even be worn in winter. First there is the heat, then the work and then thick clothes on top of it all. If you look at their soft backs, you'll find them full of prickly heat. They keep bathing till the night gets cool. One woman pumps the water while the other has a bath. At night, in spite of all their troubles and hard labour, they bathe, joke and tease the wardresses at the water tap as if they are sitting by their village well

August 14th, 1970. 10.45pm

Ratni has just left after talking to me. About an hour ago, when I was reading, I noticed a girl with a bare back was standing near the desk and staring at me. When I looked at her I instantly liked her. She is about fifteen years old. With her dark complexion, slit eyes, flat nose and a blue dot on her cheek she looks so innocent and lovely that it is hard to describe. I asked her some questions. She has been sentenced to a 14-year term for having poisoned her husband. She told me the whole story of how in her childhood she used to work in a landlord's house, how she fell in love with his son, and how her parents married her off to someone else. Afterwards she eloped with the landlord's son, was recovered, divorced her husband and was married to another man. Finally the landlord's son brought her some poison, asking her to kill her husband and be free for ever. The husband died and she is in prison.

I asked her, 'Bucho [the landlord's son] brought you the poison. Why didn't you tell the police?'

She said, 'Sister, why should I ruin his youth? I wish him happiness. But I am sad for one reason; since that day, let alone coming to see me, he has not even written me a letter. He turned out to be deceitful. God give him happiness.'

I asked, 'Didn't you know that you would be arrested for killing your husband?'

She said, 'We didn't even know that there were prisons for women or that women are prosecuted.' Then she laughed, 'I thought that after killing my husband, I would marry Bucho and become a landlady.'

This morning the Deputy Superintendent came to tell us, 'Write me an apology, then we'll set you free. Otherwise you will waste your year. There will be no examination in the prison. All the boys have submitted written apologies.' We refused to apologize and told him that we didn't care about wasting one year. If we give them an apology in this manner, the Martial Law authorities will get swollen-headed, and, secondly, coming generations will curse us. We are like the foundation. Following in our footsteps, the coming generations will have to bring about the revolution. The Sindhi nation has to be emancipated. If we show cowardice, the coming generations will remember us as cowards. They'll say that we could not bear one year's imprisonment and degraded ourselves to get out. It is not easy to change the fate of a nation. Revolution demands blood. It demands sacrifice of thousands of lives. That stage is still far off. If we get smashed in this child's play, then what will we do in years to come?

August 15th, 1970. Approximately 10pm

Before us there was no literate prisoner here. Therefore ever since we came the women have been beseeching Miss to tell us to write letters for them. Today Miss said, 'You will have the additional task of writing letters for the women.' Today I wrote five letters, and those no ordinary letters; they were full of verses, proverbs and sorrows. The women say, 'You are educated, you must know how to write "sorrows". Put such sorrows in our letters that on reading them the recipients will immediately come to visit us.' I wish there were a writer here, because I am unable to express what they want me to. After each sentence they burst into tears. There are sorrows buried in their hearts for years, which they cannot write and send out. Miss only writes them a couple of words of well-being in Urdu, and they cannot say anything in front of her.

A short while ago one of the prisoners had a fit. The women say that she is possessed. The doctors say that she has fits of hysteria. Her name is Bakhtavar. She has been sentenced to 14 years for allegedly killing her husband. Everybody in the ward says that she is innocent. She herself says, 'I didn't kill my husband. God knows who killed and buried him in front of our door. The police caught me and hung me upside down for three days. They placed my hands under the legs of the bed and three or four men sat on it. I fell unconscious. When I regained consciousness, they beat me again.' She was sentenced in a *Jirga*. She is waiting for the day when Bhutto will be President and she'll definitely be set free, because she is innocent. People spend all their lives hoping. Bakhtavar also has the hope of being released. God knows when Bhutto will become President and she will be set free!

August 16th, 1970. 11pm

Today some military officers came to visit the jail. They arrived with the Superintendent at about 11. One of them asked us if we were happier here or outside. I said, 'We are just as happy here as we were outside.' Then he said, 'Write an apology.' We replied, 'We won't give an apology till our last breath.'

Now we have begun to like the jail. Most of the women prisoners have become friends with us. They are very affectionate. One girl by the name of Zainab has made me her sister. She is about 18 or 19, slim, tall, darkish in complexion and with very long, thick hair. In the beginning, when she saw us she made faces and turned her back towards us, as if she were saying, 'So what, you have a little education, but don't think too much of yourselves, we are not inferior to you.' I asked her, 'What brought you here?' She replied, quite casually, with a twist of her braids, 'I have committed seven

murders.' I was dumbfounded. I asked her why she had done it, whom she had killed, and she said, 'I was married to my cousin. My brother had an affair with a girl in the neighbouring village. One day, the girl's brother saw them and raised hell. Finally, he made a condition: "If you marry your sister (that's me) to me, then I'll give you the girl." Ever since that day my brother kept on nagging me to leave my husband. At last he brought me some white powder and asked me to mix it in the dough and feed it to the family members. I was scared, and for several days refused to do it, but my brother kept insisting. Finally, I mixed the powder with flour and made bread. The same day, my other brother came to our house by chance. My mother-in-law came to fetch food for him. Then I was stuck: my brother was also going to eat the poisoned food. What could I do? There was no more flour in the house. I gave her the food, but called my brother to say, "Don't eat the food now. I'll bring some flour and make fresh bread. You eat that." But he said, "I'm in a hurry. I'll just have a bite and run." My breath stopped when I saw everyone eating the food. Five minutes after eating, my brother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, husband, two brothers-in-law and sister-in-law shrieked and passed out. I started crying. Finally, the police came, but they were all dead. They arrested me. The brother who had brought me the poison made me swear by a Saint that I would not mention his name, otherwise he, a poor family man, would be in trouble. I, on the other hand, had already been charged. He promised to get me freed. I took pity on him and pleaded guilty to the crime. I said, "My husband used to beat me, and my in-laws were unkind to me. That's why I killed them." I also told them that I had been having an affair with someone else. Now I have been convicted, but my brother has never written me a letter. On the contrary, he keeps telling everybody, "She was bad. What should we do about such a sister? She is dead for us." May God keep him happy with his children. But I'll never forget his betrayal all my life. If life remains, I'll finish my sentence and get out of prison.'

Today for the whole day, Zainab's face and her story were on my mind. I wondered how many girls like Zainab would stain their delicate hands with blood and come to spend all their lives in these prisons.

August 18th, 1970. 12 midnight

The music party has just stopped; it was only after the wardress shouted and protested that we stopped. The song which Mariam sang in her own language is still beating in my heart. These are innocent, truthful girls who don't know anything about the cunning, deceit and crookedness of our world. In spite of so many pains and sorrows they are still full of liveliness. This is Mariam's seventh year in jail. At the

age of 12, she was sentenced to death by hanging for allegedly killing her husband. She was in love with her maternal cousin, who actually killed her husband. She became a Muslim in jail, being originally Kolhi[15] by caste. When her appeal and a plea for clemency were rejected, the Jail Superintendent wrote to the President that the girl had become Muslim and was very young, and therefore, for having converted to Islam, should be pardoned. The Speaker of the Assembly wrote back that she would be pardoned because she had become a Muslim. Instead she was sentenced to 20 years.

I asked her how she felt at the time when her appeal had been rejected and her date of hanging fixed. She said, 'I used to weep all day long in my cell. I used to picture the scaffold. I sometimes used to see that they were taking me away; sometimes that they had covered my face with a black mask, and sometimes that my eyes had been gouged out. I had completely stopped eating. When I heard about the pardon, I couldn't believe it.'

After she had left, I kept thinking that she got the pardon only because she became a Muslim. Here there is pity only for Muslims, not for human beings.

August 20th, 1970. 11pm

Today we had visitors. Mother, Ada, Aslam, Masud and Ayaz came ... They brought me everything I had written to them about, and also some fruit. Some things the Jail authorities did not allow them to give us. When I brought the gifts back to the infirmary, sister Barkat was sitting there. When she saw me, she said, 'Akhtar, take half this fruit and a few other things to Miss and give all the wardresses something as well.' I was astonished and asked her, 'Why should I give it to Miss and the wardresses? Instead, I should give it to the prisoners, who have not seen anything like this for years, let alone eating it.' She tried to explain to me that we are helpless in this place and should not do anything that would make the wardresses not let us live. In the meantime, some other inmates came and also said that Miss would be upset that we had visitors and didn't give her anything. 'Akhtar', they said, 'you are not here only for one day, you have to live here a whole year. It has never happened that someone had visitors and didn't give anything to Miss and the wardresses. They will blame us for not telling you. Take half this fruit and give it to them.' In the end I gave some things to Miss's orderly for her, and gave each of the wardresses a little sugar, a tablet of soap and some fruit. Except for Mother Nooran, they all came to ask for the things as if I actually owed it to them. I thought to myself that we would soon have visitors again and anyway, our prison term was short. But how about these other poor inmates who hardly get a visitor once in two years? It's outrageous for them. The poor villagers come here after travelling

hundreds of miles and they have to starve their children to collect every penny to pay the fare. The *seer* of *gur*[16] or sugar and a couple of cakes of soap or the *seer* of *ghee*[17] which they bring with them are distributed among these wardresses? How much is left for the inmates? The relatives probably do not even know that the gifts they bring, with so much love and after skimping and scraping for every penny, may not even be tasted by their loved ones.

August 22nd, 1970. 10.30pm

These women think of their villages, their relatives and their children every minute and every second. If it is hot, they say, 'In such heat we used to pick cotton, make four trips each to fetch water, drink bowl after bowl of butter milk.' They reminisce about their past on every occasion. I begin to weep when I hear these things, and think about their mountain-high sentences. Sometimes I wonder if there is any way that all of them could go free. The other day it appeared in the newspapers that a town in East Pakistan was about to be submerged in flood water and there was no way to save it. So they opened the prison gates and told the inmates to run for their lives. When the women prisoners heard that news, they were all happy. They said, 'We are incarcerated, but at least some helpless people like us have got their freedom.' I said, 'What kind of freedom is that? Outside there are floods and hunger everywhere, hardly anyone of them will survive, maybe.' They replied, 'It is better to die that way than to be in jail. At least they'll die free.' Then they kept talking all day and praying that the river at Sukkur may overflow so that the gates of this prison may also be opened, or that there be a storm or a war should start and bombs should rain to demolish these walls so that they could run away.

August 23rd, 1970. 10.45pm

Every Sunday we get caustic soda and oil. Mother Rasti, the prisoner-guard who distributes the oil and soda, counted all the inmates, spread out a big bed sheet and kept on putting separate handfuls of soda for each person on to it. I asked her why there were five extra handfuls. She replied that they were for the wardresses. It turned out that the wardresses get a share of soda and oil from the inmates; officially they are not entitled to it. When I looked at the soda, I thought that it wasn't sufficient to wash even one bedsheet, and on top of that we have to give the wardresses a share! I looked at the women's thick, long hair and then at the oil; it was not sufficient for even half an application. How could it last a whole week? They give a cake of washing soap every week for the small children. There are four children in our ward, but Mother Rasti gave two cakes

to the children's mothers and two to Mother Pathan. I asked one of the wardresses about it. She said that two children get it one week and the other two the following week. I found out that every week the two remaining tablets of soap are used to wash the clothes of Miss's children.

This afternoon, when Mother Mehlan's 3-year-old son, Ali Khan, came to the kitchen to ask for bread, Mother Khani refused to give him any, saying, 'Son, you have already eaten one chapati, now I am keeping one for your mother.' I asked her how there could be only one. The children get one at each meal, and the mothers two. He had only eaten one, so his mother's two must be left. Mother Khani replied, 'Both of Ali Khan's chapatis go for pieces.' 'Pieces of what?' I asked. She said, 'Chapatis are taken from the inmates' share, dried, broken into pieces and carried in a sack for Miss's bull.' Then I recalled that Sister Barkat spends all day drying chapatis in the sun. We never paid any attention as to why they break the chapatis before drying them. I thought they were simply spare chapatis which they dry and preserve. But now I understood that Miss does the same business as the wardresses, but since the latter are from the working class, they eat these pilfered chapatis themselves, while Miss, being an officer, thinks it fit to feed them to her bull. I also found out that in return for Ali Khan's two chapatis a day, Miss gives Mother Mehlan two cakes of soap every month. She takes away half of the soap to which they are officially entitled, and then gives them back the same in exchange for their chapatis! The mothers starve themselves and their children to sell the chapatis because the kids dirty their clothes and need a lot of soap. I gave Ali Khan a chapati from my share, and kept thinking about these hidden exploiters for a long time.

August 24th, 1970

Khanzadi eats with us. She is 24 or 25. She has a 12-year-old son and comes from Pir village. She was married to a *mullah*.[18] Abdul Qadir is a small landlord in the village. Khani and Abdul Qadir used to meet each other sometimes along the way. These meetings eventually developed further. One day her husband died suddenly. The doctor said that he had been poisoned. The police arrested both Khani and Abdul Qadir. The case went to a *Jirga*. Abdul Qadir's folks, being rich, succeeded in transferring the case to a Court, where Abdul Qadir was acquitted. Khani's son, Hassan, is also angry with his mother. He says that she has got his father killed, so he doesn't come to see her. She thinks of him all the time. The other day she was weeping by herself and singing, 'The colour of black is green, Hassan has come in a bus, he has come in the one from Pir village.'

A little while ago, she came to me and asked me to write a letter to Abdul Qadir for her. I said, 'He is the one who got you trapped here,

who made you see these days. Why do you want to write a letter to him?' She said, 'Sister, I remember him so much.' I asked, 'Why do I have to write it secretly?' She replied, 'Miss says that we should write letters to our relatives only, and to nobody else. How can I explain to Miss that nobody is more related to us than the ones for whom we have given our lives?'

August 26th, 1970. 9pm

Today Haleema's sister died. Her mother and father came to tell her. There were two sisters, now one is dead and the other in prison. Haleema was crying so much that she made others cry too. She is 15 or 16 years old, a thin, darkish girl. She has been serving a ten-year term for murdering her husband. He was an old man of 80. She and a relative of her's killed him with an axe and buried him in the house. When I questioned her, she said, 'I did not step into the room in which my husband was buried. I was so scared. In the end I confessed to my sister one day. The police arrested both me and my relative.' He has also been convicted. All day Haleema sings, 'My heart is pained by grief, God. No one knows my sorrows.'

(The writer describes how she fell sick and received no medical treatment. She is forbidden to write to her family about her illness, but manages to smuggle out the news to them. They agitate with the medical authorities, and the jail authorities' attitude suddenly changes when they realize that the news of her illness is known outside the prison. She finally recovers, but, as punishment for informing her relatives of her sickness, is forbidden to take Naseem to see them next time they come to visit. Other prisoners, too, are ill, but receive no proper treatment. The infirmary attendants ignore them and spend their whole time looking after the needs of Miss and her children. The doctor rarely comes when needed, and breaks his promises of medicines, etc.)

September 25th, 1970.

This time I did not feel so happy about my visit because they did not allow Naseem to meet the visitors. Another thing that troubled me is that I overheard Sumar and Yousuf talking to each other. They are both about 7 years old, and bearing punishment with their mothers. They were wearing only shirts, and Yousuf was saying, 'Sumar, Sister Akhtar's brother was wearing trousers.' Sumar said, 'Do you know he was wearing socks too? Mother said she will give Mother Bibi Jan the undershirt she is knitting and will get some new clothes made for me too.' Yousuf said, 'If my uncle comes to visit us, I'll ask him to buy me some trousers.'

Yousuf and Sumar's conversation has renewed my hatred against our filthy system. What crime have these innocent kids committed? Why should they serve 20 years imprisonment? Because of living so long in this small ward, they have become restive and mischievous. Everybody showers them with abuse. Miss looks upon them with utter contempt and hatred and beats them for playing with her children. But these children are not prisoners. There should be schools for them outside prison, where they could at least spend half their day in the free world and stay away from the terror of Miss and the wardresses. There nobody would taunt them about the sins of their mothers, and they would be in the company of their peers and feel free. With what kinds of thoughts and habits will they come out after spending ten years or so in this environment?

September 26th, 1970. 9pm

This morning Naseem asked Khani if she would get married after her release. Khani replied, 'Sister, our marriage is with those for whom we have left our kids and ruined our lives. What other marriages are there?' Naseem asked, 'What if he doesn't care for you?' Khani answered, 'Doesn't matter if he does not care. I belong to him till my last breath.' That reminded me that today Dadli asked me to write a few words to her lover. Involved in the same case, he is now in Hazai Jail. She said that she had heard that her brother-in-law had told her parents that if they gave her hand to him in marriage in return for his brother's murder he would get her released. She wanted to inform her lover that she would not agree to this condition. I said, 'You are crazy. You have a chance to be free. You'll rot swabbing floors here. Don't waste your little son's [Sumar's] life in prison. It's a long sentence; who knows if you will live or die? Get married to your brother-in-law.' She said, 'Oh, no. What, I should be released and let this poor man who went to jail for me rot here! Four years have passed; there are six remaining, these will also pass. If there is life I'll get out. You don't change husbands every day.'

After hearing Dadli's words I kept thinking that these women are willing to bear such long sentences, such troubles and tortures. They would rather die than be disloyal. They consider it to be a greater crime to be disloyal than to commit murder. These women are so loyal to one man. What would have happened if all we Sindhi patriots showed a fraction of such loyalty to our nation?

(*Akhtar is transferred to Hyderabad to take her examinations, but becomes sick again on the journey and is unable to appear*).

October 1st, 1970. 9pm

Ada has written:

Dear Zeena,

I received your letter and got very angry. You have absolutely no need to take the exams. What kind of exam will you write in a state of illness? Write to them that you are very sick, mainly because of the way they made you travel. Don't sit for the exams, even if they send you back to Sukkur. We'll try to come and see you.

Your being in prison and not submitting an apology in spite of severe illness has played a historic role in bolstering the morale of our nation. These are the things that differentiate between the phoney and self-serving zealots and the courageous patriots ...

We remember you every minute, every second, but we are happy that you are in the battlefield.

Rasul Bux

October 4th, 1970

Mother has sent me this letter:

Dear daughter Zeena,

Jeeye Sind.

Yesterday I came to the jail with things for you; I sent in an application at 11.30, but by 1 p.m. there was still no reply. I got very tired and spoke to the Superintendent. He called Sarhindi, who said that I'd not be allowed to see you because we had visited you in Sukkur on the 25th ...

I am very proud of you, but I am only worried about your health. Sometimes I fear that your nerves will be shattered. Then I think that the Palestinian Laila also had a mother, and Qurat-ul-Ain Tahira also had a mother. The hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese also have mothers. The nation whose women and men have courage will live for ever; it will never be a slave. This is merely imprisonment, but we won't be shaken up even if they hang you. We all have to die one day. It is a thousand times preferable to die on the battlefield than to die in bed.

... every moment I pray for your valour, truthfulness and courage. You will succeed in your great objectives. You'll not become anybody's slave. You are my daughter, but I swear on Sind that if I had a hundred daughters I would not hesitate to sacrifice them all for the land of Sind ...

Your mother

Central Jail, Sukkur
October 9th, 1970, 8pm

I returned to Sukkur early yesterday morning. The Jailer had not yet arrived and we had to wait outside. I was so anxious to get in. I felt as if I had returned home from a foreign land. All the women gathered near the door. As I entered, Naseem and the others hugged me. I was so pleased. Everybody was asking me, 'Did you enjoy yourself in Hyderabad?' I replied, 'Not at all. I was obliged to go there, otherwise I would never have gone. Who would like to leave so many sisters?'

Occasionally I remember my home and family. Otherwise I feel that ever since I came into the world I have been seeing these women.

October 12th, 1970

Today I received Mother's letter. She says:

> ... Given the circumstances, your journey from Hyderabad was all right. My daughter, this was a train journey — and that, too, for five hours only. When Sir Charles Napier conquered Sind on behalf of his nation, he had to go on business from Shikarpur to Lahore. He travelled for 3 months on horseback.

October 18th, 1970

Mother writes:

> ... Everybody had your name on her lips. 'Poor girl'. They don't realize that I am not one of those mothers. In our Baluch family, when the baby is still in her cradle, the mothers say, 'My moon, my sweetheart! Grow up quickly so that you may avenge your father!' The Vietnamese mothers say, 'Son, go to bed. This is the time to sleep, because when you grow up you'll have to keep awake a lot. You'll have to fight for your fatherland.'
>
> Your mother

October 19th, 1970

An inmate is an inmate, but there are two types of women prisoners: one class consists of the cunning, crafty, exploitative 'Urdu-ites', and the other of the humble and meek Sindhi women. The exploiter class includes Sister Barkat, Kishwar and their two or three followers. Sister Barkat and her co-wife are Punjabi; both of them have tongues sharper than scissors. They are extremely deceitful, and know how to flatter Miss. Miss herself is an 'Urdu-ite'. Kishwar takes care of Miss's

children all day long, and Sister Barkat massages her all day and gives her a share from her ration. The co-wives speak ill of the other women to the Miss in order to turn her against them. Hence, the women are more afraid of Sister Barkat than they are of Miss and the wardresses. It is Sister Barkat's business to catch women's weaknesses and exploit them by blackmailing them. She takes rations from some and gets trouser-cords and undershirts made by others to sell. The women do everything she asks them to, because they are afraid that she will report to Miss against them.

November 14th, 1970

There are four Bhil[19] girls here, whom Miss has converted to Islam by making them false promises of remission of sentences and by painting the horrors of hell and the pleasures of paradise. One of them, Ratni, received a letter from her brother after a gap of three years. On hearing the letter read to her she started crying so much that she couldn't stop. Other women kept saying to her, 'Now you are a Muslim. You have no connection with your relatives. Don't answer the letter.' Some said, 'Write to your brothers that you have become a Muslim and that you have no concern with them. Tell them not to write to you in future.' But Ratni did not utter a word. I felt like saying to her, 'I know how you feel. Tell them all that you don't want their "paradise", you are alright as a Bhil. To you, your brothers, mother and father are dearer than anything else. You are theirs and will return to them.' But she just kept on crying.

November 15th, 1970

I was upset over an incident this morning. For the last several days, one or the other woman has been robbed of her chapatis. Today, after two or three days' search, they caught a new inmate red-handed. She cleans that dormitory. As she had taken the chapati and was trying to hide it under her shirt, the other women saw her. Then there was a fracas. They took hold of her hair, brought her down on the floor, pulled out the chapati and then inmates, prisoner-guards and wardresses set about beating her. Her 2-year-old son fell down on the floor and was also hit. On seeing so many people beating one person like savages, I tried to separate them. But who would listen to me? Afterwards, the woman told me, 'I have a nursing child, but they make me work. Therefore I get very hungry, and that's why I stole food.' How unmerciful it is here. The woman has a small child, yet they make her sweep the barrack and fetch water all day long for mopping and swabbing. That's why her little son always has a cough and cold. On the other hand, hale and hearty persons like Sister Barkat and company are walking around with complete immunity from work.

November 16th, 1970

Today Qaiman has come back to prison after having her bail order cancelled. She said, 'The landlord of our village had told my parents that he would get me off if they handed me over to him. I cannot accept this condition. Therefore, I got the bail order cancelled.'

November 18th, 1970

Today I received Ada's letter:

> Zeena,
> *Jeeye Sind.*
> ... November and the month of Ramadan.[20] Last year there was no happiness for us on the occasion of Eid;[21] this year also there will be the same sadness and the same yearning. But one should think how these strange, bitter and lonely Eids might lead to many pleasing, sweet and happy Eids for the motherland and its people....

December 4th, 1970

Eid came and went. On the Eid day, all the women wept as they remembered the festivals they had spent with their parents and children.

December 5th, 1970

The National Assembly elections are to be held on the 7th; therefore, everybody here is commenting on the elections all the time. Here all the Sindhi women support the People's Party. They keep asking us, 'Sister! Who'll win? Will Bhutto become the President? Will Bhutto do something for us prisoners? Will he empty the jails?'[22] What should I tell these women about who will win and who will do what for them? We don't know ourselves.

They pray and make wishes all day for Bhutto's victory. Some have composed verses about him. Some have seen dreams: 'There is a man who is tearing up the records of our convictions and opening the prison gates, telling us, "You are free".' They say that man is definitely Bhutto.

December 8th, 1970

There was polling yesterday. This morning the door opened and the wardress came and told us that Bhutto had won. The women started dancing, singing and beating drums. Miss came and said to me,

'Congratulations, Akhtar. Your Bhutto has won.' On that, Sister Barkat commented, 'Everybody does what is good for himself. Even if Bhutto has risen to power, what will he do for us?'

Today the women celebrated victory all day.

December 9th, 1970

Today there was a quarrel between Khanzadi and two wardresses. The children get milk each day, which their mothers sell to wardresses. The wardresses give them a rupee for one month's supply. Yesterday, Khanzadi said to Yousuf's mother, 'I am ill. Give me Yousuf's milk and I'll pay you 2 rupees a month.' Attracted by an extra rupee, Yousuf's mother started giving milk to Khani instead of to Mother Fatima [the wardress]. Today Mother Fatima and Mother Nooran came and started quarrelling with Khani. 'You inmates are trying to rob the wardresses of their rights', they said. 'Now we'll see about someone else getting the milk. *We* won't buy chapatis from you. *We'll* search you every day. We'll see if even the skin of an onion gets through into this ward. We'll see who will sell your trouser-cords and undershirts.'

On hearing these threats, poor Khani prostrated herself and apologized. Now Yousuf's mother has started giving the milk to Mother Fatima again.

Hyderabad
December 19th, 1970

I am sitting at home in my room. We were freed last evening. We heard in the Sindhi news on the radio yesterday morning that President Yahya had decided to release political prisoners.[23] When we told the other women that we were going to be released, they came and gathered round us. Many had tears in their eyes. Some said, 'Sister, when you get out, tell Bhutto about us. Pray that we also be freed suddenly like you.'

We wrote letters for them for the last time. That day we must have written over a hundred letters, three or four for each woman.

Mother Khani prepared sweet vermicelli for us, but we couldn't swallow a bite. We were extremely happy, but as we looked at the women, we experienced a strange feeling. I was reminded of our first day, of each moment we had passed here. We recalled the first meeting with each woman, the moonlit nights that we spent with them, the songs they had sung. We remembered how they used to cry as we wrote letters for them, how they consoled us and prayed for us when we were ill. I kept thinking that I was leaving behind such oppressed, innocent and sweet people. I wished I could open up the heart of each one of them and commune with them with open heart.

NOTES

1 The voters' list was prepared in English and Urdu only. The Sindhi population demanded its publication in Sindhi as well.
2 In 1955, the four provinces of West Pakistan were amalgamated into what was commonly known as 'One Unit'. The people of Sind, Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province viewed this as a method of rationalizing Punjabi domination, waged a determined struggle for the break-up of One Unit and succeeded in having it dissolved in 1969.
3 It is a common custom in Asian countries to prefix names, particularly those of persons older than oneself, with titles like Mother, Sister, Brother, etc., in order to denote respect.
4 Traditionally, the *Jirga* is the council of tribal elders which dispenses justice. The British colonial rulers coopted this institution into their judicial system in the North-West Frontier Province for adjudicating criminal cases. Conducting trials by this system became synonymous with denying the due process of law to an accused person. General Ayub Khan extended the system to the whole of West Pakistan.
5 These rituals are performed to provide religious rationalization for the non-marriage of upper-class women.
6 *Meers* — the descendents of former rulers of Sind. *Peers* — spiritual leaders with a large popular following. *Sayeds* — the supposed descendants of the Prophet Mohammad. These three combined comprise a large proportion of the Sindhi landlord class.
7 Universally acknowledged as the greatest living poet of Sind; presently Vice-Chancellor of Sind University.
8 Ada — the literal translation of this Sindhi word is 'brother'. Here it refers to the author's stepfather, Rasul Bux Palejo, an eminent Sindhi writer, lawyer and politician.
9 The author's nickname, used by her family.
10 Recitations to the glory of the Prophet Mohammed.
11 The crow is supposed to be a messenger bird. Sitting on the roof-top it is interpreted as signifying good news in the form of the arrival of guests.
12 The rallying cry for mobilizing the Sindhi people in the struggle for their national rights. It has since become the usual mode of greeting among Sindhi nationalists.
13 Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit (1689-1752) is the poet-Saint of Sind and the greatest symbol of Sindhi national identity.
14 From the epic of Shah Latif.
15 One of the several 'untouchable' aboriginal castes living in Sind.
16 Molasses (one seer = 2.057 pounds).
17 Clarified butter.
18 A religious person whose usual functions include taking care of the mosque, leading prayer, giving sermons and giving religious education to children.
19 An aboriginal caste.
20 Muslim month of fasting.
21 A Muslim festival.
22 Taken in by the People's Party's revolutionary propaganda, inmates in several Pakistani prisons attempted jail breaks, chanting slogans in support of Bhutto, who had become President of Pakistan in December 1971. These uprisings were mercilessly crushed and several prisoners were shot dead.
23 At present (September 1976), despite the initial hopes generated by Bhutto's victory, there are once more thousands of political prisoners in Pakistani jails. Most are nationalists of Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province, but a few are Sindhis.

ORLANDO LETELIER

Chile: economic 'freedom' and political repression

Orlando Letelier was a former senior economist and director of the loan division of the Inter-American Development Bank. He was Chilean Ambassador to the United States (at the time when Chile was nationalizing the US copper mines) and later became Interior Minister, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister in the Popular Unity (Allende) Government. In the coup d'état of 11 September 1973 he was seized and held for twelve months in concentration camps, suffering severe torture, until international pressure secured his release into exile. He then worked at the Institute for Policy Studies on a project on the New International Economic Order. He was later appointed Director of the Transnational Institute (the international programme of IPS) and, amongst other things, set up a Latin America unit. He also taught at the School of International Services, American University, Washington, DC.

On 10 September 1976 the Chilean government stripped Orlando of his citizenship for 'gravely threatening the essential interests of the state'. At the time, Orlando was conducting a successful campaign against US investment in Chile. He had already been instrumental in preventing the Dutch government from underwriting a loan of $63 million to the Chilean junta. On 11 September Orlando addressed a packed auditorium at Madison Square Gardens, New York City, during a concert held to mark the fall of Allende. He denounced the junta yet again and affirmed his determination to continue the fight. On 21 September he was murdered.

Some weeks before his death in Washington, Orlando, who was a member of the Editorial Working Committee of Race & Class, *submitted this article for publication. And although the piece has already appeared in the* Nation, Le Monde Diplomatique *and the* New

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Statesman — and is also available in pamphlet form — we publish it below, not just in memory of a colleague, or as one record of his services to the Transnational Institute and this journal, but in keeping with his larger aim of reaching every possible constituency in his ceaseless struggle against the junta.

Specifically, in his article here, Orlando shows in precise and concrete terms how bourgeois scholarship is instrumental in establishing and perpetuating fascist dictatorships in the third world. Milton Friedman, Arnold Harberger and the Chicago school of economists had for years been blue-printing an economic model for Chile and the 'underdeveloped' world. They had even set up their cohorts in Chile: the technicians who would shape and execute the economic policies Friedman advocated. Pinochet and the military junta provided the perfect setting: a political system which, in outlawing all freedoms, gives free reign to a 'pure economics', an economics against people — what Gunder Frank has termed 'economic genocide'.

Friedman won a Nobel Prize. Orlando was assassinated.

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It would seem to be a common-sense sort of observation that economic policies are conditioned by and at the same time modify the social and political situation where they are put into practice. Economic policies are introduced precisely in order to alter social structures.

If I dwell on these considerations, therefore, it is because the necessary connection between economic policy and its sociopolitical setting appears to be absent from many analyses of the current situation in Chile. To put it briefly, the violation of human rights, the system of institutionalized brutality, the drastic control and suppression of every form of meaningful dissent is discussed (and often condemned) as a phenomenon only indirectly linked, or indeed entirely unrelated, to the classical unrestrained 'free market' policies that have been enforced by the military junta. This failure to connect has been particularly characteristic of private and public financial institutions, which have publicly praised and supported the economic policies adopted by the Pinochet government, while regretting the 'bad international image' the junta has gained from its 'incomprehensible' persistence in torturing, jailing and persecuting all its critics. A recent World Bank decision to grant a $33 million loan to the junta was justified by its President, Robert McNamara, as based on purely 'technical' criteria, implying no particular relationship to the present political and social conditions in the country.

The same line of justification has been followed by American private banks which, in the words of a spokesman for a business consulting firm, 'have been falling all over one another to make

loans'.[1] But probably no one has expressed this attitude better than the US Secretary of the Treasury. After a visit to Chile, during which he discussed human rights violations by the military government, William Simon congratulated Pinochet for bringing 'economic freedom' to the Chilean people.[2] This particularly convenient concept of a social system in which 'economic freedom' and political terror coexist without touching each other, allows these financial spokesmen to support their concept of 'freedom' while exercising their verbal muscles in defence of human rights.

The usefulness of the distinction has been particularly appreciated by those who have generated the economic policies now being carried out in Chile. In *Newsweek* Milton Friedman, who is the intellectual architect and unofficial adviser for the team of economists now running the Chilean economy, stated:

> In spite of my profound disagreement with the authoritarian political system of Chile, I do not consider it as evil for an economist to render technical economic advice to the Chilean Government, any more than I would regard it as evil for a physician to give technical medical advice to the Chilean Government to help end a medical plague.[3]

It is curious that the man who wrote a book, *Capitalism and Freedom*, to drive home the argument that only classical economic liberalism can support political democracy, can now so easily disentangle economics from politics when the economic theories he advocates coincide with an absolute restriction of every type of democratic freedom. One would logically expect that if those who curtail private enterprise are held responsible for the effects of their measures in the political sphere, those who impose unrestrained 'economic freedom' would also be held responsible when the imposition of this policy is inevitably accompanied by massive repression, hunger, unemployment and the permanence of a brutal police state.

THE ECONOMIC PRESCRIPTION AND CHILE'S REALITY

The economic plan now being carried out in Chile realizes an historic aspiration of a group of Chilean economists, most of them trained at Chicago University by Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger. Deeply involved in the preparation of the coup, the 'Chicago boys', as they are known in Chile, convinced the generals that they were prepared to supplement the brutality, which the military possessed, with the intellectual assets it lacked. The US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has disclosed that 'CIA collaborators' helped plan the economic measures that Chile's junta enacted.

immediately after seizing power.[4] Committee witnesses maintain that some of the 'Chicago boys' received CIA funds for such research efforts as a 300-page economic blueprint that was given to military leaders before the coup. It is therefore understandable that after seizing power they were, as the *Wall Street Journal* put it, 'champing to be unleashed' on the Chilean economy.[5] Their first approach to the situation was gradual; only after a year of relative confusion did they decide to implement without major modification the theoretical model they had been taught at Chicago. The occasion merited a visit to Chile by Mr Friedman himself who, along with his associate, Professor Harberger, made a series of well-publicized appearances to promote a 'shock treatment' for the Chilean economy — something that Friedman emphatically described as 'the only medicine. Absolutely. There is no other. There is no other long-term solution.'[6]

These are the basic principles of the economic model offered by Friedman and his followers and adopted by the Chilean junta: that the only possible framework for economic development is one within which the private sector can freely operate; that private enterprise is the most efficient form of economic organization, and that, therefore, the private sector should be the predominant factor in the economy. Prices should fluctuate freely in accordance with the laws of competition. Inflation, the worst enemy of economic progress, is the direct result of monetary expansion and can be eliminated only by a drastic reduction of government spending.

Except in present-day Chile, no government in the world gives private enterprise an absolutely free hand. That is so because every economist (except Friedman and his followers) has known for decades that, in the real life of capitalism, there is no such thing as the perfect competition described by classical liberal economists. In March 1975, in Santiago, a newsman dared to suggest to Friedman that even in more advanced capitalist countries, as for example the United States, the government applies various types of controls on the economy. Mr Friedman answered: 'I have always been against it, I don't approve of them. I believe we should not apply them. I am against economic intervention by the government, in my own country, as well as in Chile or anywhere else.'[7]

This is not the place to evaluate the general validity of the postulates advanced by Friedman and the Chicago School. I want to concentrate only on what happens when their model is applied to a country like Chile. Here Friedman's theories are especially objectionable — from an economic as well as a moral point of view — because they propose a total free market policy in a framework of extreme inequality among the economic agents involved: inequality between monopolistic and small and medium entrepreneurs; inequality between the owners of capital and those who own only their capacity

to work, etc. Similar situations would exist if the model were applied to any other underdeveloped, dependent economy.

It is preposterous to speak about free competition in Chile. The economy there is highly monopolized. An academic study made during President Frei's regime pointed out that in 1966:

> 284 enterprises controlled each and every one of the subdivisions of Chilean economic activities. In the industrial sector, 144 enterprises controlled each and every one of the subsectors. In turn, within each of these 144 manufacturing enterprises which constituted the core of the industrial sector, a few shareholders controlled management: in more than 50% of the enterprises, the ten largest shareholders owned between 90 and 100% of the capital.[8]

On the other hand, studies also conducted during the pre-Allende period demonstrated the extent to which the Chilean economy has been dominated by foreign-based multinationals. As Barnet and Müller put it in *Global Reach*:

> In pre-Allende Chile, 51% of the largest 160 firms were effectively controlled by global corporations. In each of the seven key industries of the economy one to three firms controlled at least 51% of the production. Of the top twenty-two global corporations operating in the country, nineteen either operated free of all competition or shared the market with other oligopolists.[9]

From 1971 to 1973, most of the monopolistic and oligopolistic industries were nationalized and transferred to the public sector. However, the zeal with which the military dictatorship has dismantled state participation in the economy and transferred industries to foreign ownership suggests that levels of concentration and monopolization are now at least as high as they were before the Popular Unity (Allende) Government.

An International Monetary Fund Report of May 1976 points out:

> The process of returning to the private sector the vast majority of the enterprises which over the previous fifteen years, but especially in 1971-73, had become part of the public sector continued [during 1975] ... At the end of 1973 the Public Development Corporation (CORFO) had a total of 492 enterprises, including eighteen commercial banks ... Of this total, 253 enterprises ... have been returned to their former owners. Among the other 239 enterprises ... 104 (among them ten banks) have been sold; sixteen (including two banks) have already been adjudicated, with the completion of the transfer procedure being a matter of weeks; the sale of another twenty-one is being negotiated bilaterally with groups of potential buyers ...

Competitive bidding is still to be solicited for the remaining enterprises. Obviously the buyers are always a small number of powerful economic interests who have been adding these enterprises to the monopolistic or oligopolistic structures within which they operate. At the same time, a considerable number of industries have been sold to transnational corporations, among them the national tyre industry (INSA), bought by Firestone for an undisclosed sum, and one of the main paper pulp industries (Celulosa Forestal Arauco), bought by Parsons & Whittemore.

There are many other examples to show that, as far as competition goes, Mr Friedman's prescription does not yield the economic effects implicit in his theoretical model. In the first half of 1975, as part of the process of lifting regulations from the economy, the price of milk was exempted from control. With what result? The price to the consumer rose 40 per cent and the price paid to the producer dropped 22 per cent. There are more than 10,000 milk producers in Chile but only two milk processing companies, which control the market. More than 80 per cent of Chilean paper production and all of certain types of paper come from one enterprise — the Compania Manufacturera de Papeles y Cartones, controlled by the Alessandri interests — which establishes prices without fear of competition. More than fifteen foreign brands are offered in the Chilean home appliances market, but they are all in the hands of only three companies, which assemble them in Chile and determine their retail prices.

Of course, any of the followers of the Chicago School would say that, with the liberalization of the international market, as prescribed by the model, Chilean monopolies and oligopolies would be exposed to competition from abroad. However, that does not happen. Chile so lacks foreign currency that it cannot import what it needs of even the most essential goods. Still more important is the fact that foreign enterprises are not interested in sending to Chile goods which could compete with those manufactured by their own Chilean subsidiaries. Besides, in Chile the economic interests which control the manufacturing industry also control the financial apparatus and import activities. These groups are not disposed to compete with themselves. In short, the application of Friedman's theories to the real work of Chile means that the industrialists can freely 'compete' at whatever price levels they choose.

Other aspects of the brand of economics taught at the University of Chicago are conveniently ignored by the junta's economic advisers. One is the importance of wage contracts freely negotiated between employers and workers; another is the efficiency of the market as an instrument to allocate resources in the economy. It is sardonic to mention the right of the workers to negotiate in a country where the Central Workers' Federation has been outlawed and where salaries are

established by the junta's decree. It may also seem grotesque to speak of the market as the most effective instrument for allocating resources when it is widely known that there are practically no productive investments in the economy because the most profitable 'investment' is speculation. Under the slogan 'We must create a capital market in Chile', selected private groups enjoying the junta's protection have been authorized to establish so-called *financieras*, which engage in the most outrageous financial speculations. Their abuses have been so flagrant that even Orlando Saez, former president of the Chilean Industrialists' Association and a staunch supporter of the coup, could not refrain from protesting:

> It is not possible to continue with the financial chaos that dominates in Chile. It is necessary to channel into productive investments the millions and millions of financial resources that are now being used in wild-cat speculative operations before the very eyes of those who don't even have a job.[10]

But the crux of Friedman's prescription, as the junta never ceases to emphasize, is control of inflation. It should, according to the junta, enlist 'the vigorous efforts of all Chileans'. Professor Harberger declared categorically in April 1975:

> I can see no excuses for not stopping inflation: its origins are well known; government deficits and monetary expansion have to be stopped. I know you are going to ask me about unemployment; if the government deficits were reduced by half, still the rate of unemployment would not increase more than 1%.[11]

According to the junta's official figures, between April and December 1975 the government deficit was reduced by approximately the 50 per cent that Harberger recommended. In the same period, unemployment rose six times as much as he had predicted. The remedy he continues to advocate consists of reducing government spending, which will reduce the amount of currency in circulation. This will result in a contraction of demand, which in turn will bring about a general reduction of prices. Thus inflation would be defeated. Professor Harberger does not say explicitly *who* would have to lower their standard of living to bear the costs of the cure.

Without a doubt, excessive monetary expansion constitutes an important inflationary factor in any economy. However, inflation in Chile (or any underdeveloped country) is a far more complex problem than the one presupposed by the mechanical models of the monetarist theorists. The followers of the Chicago School seem to forget, for example, that the monopolistic structure of the Chilean economy allows the dominant firms to maintain prices in the face of falling demand. They also forget the role that so-called inflationary expectations play in generating price increases. In Chile, inflationary

expectations have lately been approximating 1 per cent per month. Looking ahead, firms prepare for rising costs by raising their own prices. This continuous price 'leap-frogging' feeds a general inflationary spiral. On the other hand, in such an inflationary climate, no one with liquid assets wants to hold them. Powerful interest groups, operating without government control, can thus manipulate the financial apparatus. They create institutions to absorb any available money and use it in various forms of speculation, which thrive on and propel inflation.

THE ECONOMIC RESULTS

Three years have passed since this experiment began in Chile and sufficient information is available to conclude that Friedman's Chilean disciples failed — at least in their avowed and measurable objectives — and particularly in their attempts to control inflation. But they have succeeded, at least temporarily, in their broader purpose: to secure the economic and political power of a small dominant class by effecting a massive transfer of wealth from the lower and middle classes to a select group of monopolists and financial speculators.

The empirical proof of the economic failure is overwhelming. On 24 April 1975, after the last known visit of Messrs Friedman and Harberger to Chile, the junta's Minister of Finance, Jorge Cauas, said:

> The Hon. junta have asked me to formulate and carry out an economic program primarily directed to eradicate inflation. Together with a numerous group of technicians [*obviously Friedman and company*], we have presented to the Chilean authorities a program of economic revival which has been approved and is beginning. The principal objective of this program is to stop inflation in the remainder of 1975.

By the end of 1975 Chile's annual rate of inflation had reached 341 per cent — the highest rate of inflation in the world. (The two countries with the next highest rates of inflation in 1975 were Argentina, with 312 per cent, and Uruguay, with 68.1 per cent. Both are countries with dependent capitalist economies that apply junta-style models of political repression and 'economic freedom'.) Consumer prices increased that same year by an average 375 per cent; wholesale prices rose by 440 per cent.

Analysing the causes of Chilean inflation in 1975, a recent report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) says: 'The cutback in government spending, with its adverse effects on employment, in housing, and public works, went significantly further than programmed in order to accommodate the large credit demands of the private

sector.' Later on it states: 'Overall monetary management remained expansionary in 1975. Moreover, continued high inflationary expectations and the public's attendant unwillingness to increase its real cash balances greatly complicated the implementation of the monetary program.' Referring to private organizations which have begun to operate without any control, the report adds that the *financieras* have been allowed to operate beside the commercial banking system and at interest rates up to 50 per cent higher than the maximum permissible banking rate. According to the same source, the *financieras* were operating in 1975 at an interest rate of 14 per cent a month, or 168 per cent a year; they obtained loans in New York at 10 to 12 per cent a year.

The implementation of the Chicago model has not achieved a significant reduction of monetary expansion. It has, however, brought about a merciless reduction of the income of wage earners and a dramatic increase in unemployment; at the same time it has increased the amount of currency in circulation by means of loans and transfers to big firms, and by granting to private financial institutions the power to create money. As James Petras, an American political scientist, put it: 'The very social classes on which the junta depends are the main instrumentalities of the inflation.'[12]

The inflationary process, which the junta's policies stimulated immediately after the coup, was slightly reduced in 1975 as compared to the unbelievable rate of 375.9 per cent in 1974. Such a minor reduction, however, does not indicate any substantial approach to stabilization and seems on the whole utterly irrelevant to the majority of Chileans who must endure the total collapse of their economy. This situation recalls the story of a Latin American dictator at the beginning of this century. When his advisers came to tell him that the country was suffering from a very serious educational problem, he ordered all public schools closed. Now, more than seventy years into this century, there still remain disciples of the anecdotal dictator who think that the way to eradicate poverty in Chile is to kill the poor people.

The exchange rate depreciations and the cutbacks in governmental expenditures have produced a depression which, in less than three years has slowed the country's rate of development to what it was twelve years ago. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted during 1975 by nearly 15 per cent to its lowest level since 1969, while, according to the IMF, real national income 'dropped by as much as 26 per cent, leaving real per capita income below its level ten years earlier'. The decline in the overall 1975 GDP reflects an 8.1 per cent drop in the mining sector, a 27 per cent decline in the manufacturing industries and a 35 per cent drop in construction. Petroleum extraction declined by an estimated 11 per cent, while transport, storage and communications declined 15.3 per cent, and commerce fell 21.5 per cent.

In the agricultural sector production appears virtually stagnant in 1975-6, with only an 0.4 per cent variation from the previous agricultural year. This stagnation has been caused by a combination of factors, including the continued rise in the cost of imported fertilizers and pesticides. The use of fertilizer dropped by an estimated 40 per cent in 1975-6. The increase in import prices also accounted for the decline in production of pork and poultry, which are almost entirely dependent on imported feed. The return to the former owners of several million hectares of farm land, that had been expropriated and transferred to peasant organizations under the 1967 Agrarian Reform Law, has also reduced agricultural production. As of the end of 1975 almost 60 per cent of all agricultural estates affected by the land reform — equivalent to about 24 per cent of total expropriated land — has been subject to the junta's decisions. Of this total, 40 per cent of the agricultural enterprises (75 per cent of the physical acreage and more than 50 per cent of the irrigated land) has entirely reverted to former owners.

In the external sector of the economy, the results have been equally disastrous. In 1975 the value of exports dropped 28 per cent, from $2.13 billion to $1.53 billion, and the value of imports dropped 18 per cent, from $2.24 billion to $1.81 billion, thus showing a trade deficit of $280 million. Imports of foodstuffs dropped from $561 million in 1974, to $361 million in 1975. In the same period domestic food production declined, causing a drastic reduction in food for the masses of the population. Concurrently, the outstanding external public debt repayable in foreign currency increased from $3.60 billion on 31 December 1974, to $4.31 billion on 31 December 1975. This accentuated Chile's dependence on external sources of financing, especially from the United States. The junta's policies have burdened Chile with one of the highest per capita foreign debts in the world. In the years to come the nation will have to allocate more than 34 per cent of its projected export earnings to the payment of external debts.

But the most dramatic result of the economic policies has been the rise in unemployment. Before the coup, unemployment in Chile was 3.1 per cent, one of the lowest in the western hemisphere. By the end of 1974, the jobless rate had climbed beyond 10 per cent in the Santiago metropolitan area and was also higher in several other sections of the country. Official junta and IMF figures show that by the end of 1975 unemployment in the Santiago metropolitan area had reached 18.7 per cent; the corresponding figure in other parts of the country was more than 22 per cent; and in specific sectors, such as the construction industry, it had reached almost 40 per cent. Unemployment has continued to climb in 1976 and, according to the most conservative estimates, in July approximately 2.5 million Chileans (about one-fourth of the population) had no income at all;

they survive thanks to the food and clothing distributed by the church and other humanitarian organizations. The attempts by religious and other institutions to ease the economic desperation of thousands of Chilean families have been made, in most cases, under the suspicion and hostile actions of the secret police.

The inhuman conditions under which a high percentage of the Chilean population lives is reflected most dramatically by substantial increases in malnutrition, infant mortality and the appearance of thousands of beggars on the streets of Chilean cities. It forms a picture of hunger and deprivation never seen before in Chile. Families receiving the 'minimum wage' cannot purchase more than 1,000 calories and 15 grams of protein per person per day. That is less than half the minimum satisfactory level of consumption established by the World Health Organization. It is, in short, slow starvation. Infant mortality, reduced significantly during the Allende years, jumped a dramatic 18 per cent during the first year of the military government, according to figures provided by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America. To deflect criticism from within its own ranks against the brutal consequences of layoffs, the junta in 1975 established a token 'minimum employment program'. However, it covers only 3 per cent of the labour force, and pays salaries amounting to less than $30 — a month!

Although the economic policies have more mercilessly affected the working classes, the general debacle has significantly touched the middle class as well. At the same time, medium size national enterprises have had their expectations destroyed by the reduction in demand, and have been engulfed and destroyed by the monopolies against which they were supposed to compete. Because of the collapse of the automobile industry, hundreds of machine shops and small industries which acted as sub-contractors have faced bankruptcy. Three major textile firms (FIAD, Tomé Oveja and Bellavista) are working three days a week; several shoe companies, among them Calzados Bata, have had to close. Ferriloza, one of the main producers of consumer durables, recently declared itself bankrupt. Facing this situation, Raul Sahli, the new president of the Chilean Industrialists' Association, and himself linked to big monopolies, declared earlier in the year: 'The social market economy should be applied in all its breadth. If there are industrialists who complain because of this, let them go to hell. I won't defend them.'[13]

The nature of the economic prescription and its results can be most vividly stated by citing the pattern of domestic income distribution. In 1972, during the Popular Unity Government, employees and workers received 62.9 per cent of the total national income; 37.1 per cent went to the propertied sector. By 1974, the share of the wage earners had been reduced to 38.2 per cent, while the participation of property had increased to 61.8 per cent. During 1975, 'average real

wages are estimated to have declined by almost 8 per cent', according to the International Monetary Fund. It is probable that these regressive trends in income distribution have continued during 1976. What it means is that during the last three years several billions of dollars were taken from the pockets of wage earners and placed in those of capitalists and landowners. These are the economic results of the application in Chile of the prescription proposed by Friedman and his group.

A RATIONALE FOR POWER

The economic policies of the Chilean junta and its results have to be placed in the context of a wide counter-revolutionary process that aims to restore to a small minority the economic, social and political control it gradually lost over the last thirty years, and particularly in the years of the Popular Unity Government.

Until 11 September 1973, the date of the coup, Chilean society had been characterized by the increasing participation of the working class and its political parties in economic and social decision making. Since about 1900, employing the mechanisms of representative democracy, workers had steadily gained new economic, social and political power. The election of Salvador Allende as President of Chile was the culmination of this process. For the first time in history a society attempted to build socialism by peaceful means. During Allende's time in office there was a marked improvement in the conditions of employment, health, housing, land tenure and education of the masses. And as this occurred, the privileged domestic groups and the dominant foreign interests perceived themselves to be seriously threatened.

Despite strong financial and political pressure from abroad and efforts to manipulate the attitudes of the middle class by propaganda, popular support for the Allende government increased significantly between 1970 and 1973. In March 1973, only five months before the military coup, there were Congressional elections in Chile. The political parties in the Popular Unity increased their share of the votes by more than 7 percentage points over their totals in the Presidential election of 1970. This was the first time in Chilean history that the political parties supporting the administration in power gained votes during a midterm election. The trend convinced the national bourgeoisie and its foreign supporters that they would be unable to recoup their privileges through the democratic process. That is why they resolved to destroy the democratic system and the institutions of the state, and, through an alliance with the military, to seize power by force.

The military coup opened the way to one of the most extraordinary

examples of social and political regression in this century. In a matter of hours the generals had unequivocally defined their roles as restorers of the old social and economic order. Repression and terror against those who had supported the Popular Unity went along with a careful and systematic process of purges and revision of goals in the political, the economic and the cultural spheres designed to return to the traditional dominant classes their lost predominance. It was soon apparent that this amounted to a phenomenon of massive class revenge of the rich against the poor who had dared to imagine a society of their own. As a dramatic illustration of this stands the fact, proven by Church reports, that more than 80 per cent of those 100,000 Chileans detained are workers or peasants.

In such a context, concentration of wealth is no accident, but a rule; it is not the marginal outcome of a difficult situation — as the junta would like the world to believe — but the base for a social project; it is not an economic liability but a temporary political success. Their real failure is not their apparent inability to redistribute wealth or to generate a more even path of development (these are not their priorities) but their inability to convince the majority of Chileans that their policies are reasonable and necessary. In short, they have failed to destroy the consciousness of the Chilean people. The economic plan has had to be enforced, and in the Chilean context that could be done only by the killing of thousands, the establishment of concentration camps all over the country, the jailing of more than 100,000 persons in three years, the closing of trade unions and neighbourhood organizations, and the prohibition of all political activities and all forms of free expression.

While the 'Chicago boys' have provided an appearance of technical respectability to the *laissez-faire* dreams and political greed of the old landowning oligarchy and upper bourgeoisie of monopolists and financial speculators, the military has applied the brutal force required to achieve those goals. Repression for the majorities and 'economic freedom' for small privileged groups are in Chile two sides of the same coin.

There is, therefore, an inner harmony between the two central priorities announced by the junta after the coup in 1973: the 'destruction of the Marxist cancer' which has come to mean not only the repression of the political parties of the Left, but also the destruction of all labour organizations democratically elected and all opposition, including Christian-Democrats and church organisations — and the establishment of a free 'private economy' and the control of inflation *à la* Friedman.

It is nonsensical, consequently, that those who inspire, support or finance that economic policy should try to present their advocacy as restricted to 'technical considerations', while pretending to reject the system of terror it requires to succeed.

The truth behind it all is that the financial and monopolist bourgeoisie of our dependent countries, and their mentors and masters in the imperialist centre, have realized that in most of these societies, particularly in those with strong working-class organizations, not only socialist but also liberal democracy, so enthusiastically praised in the past, cannot be allowed anymore. Experience has proved to them that even the most restricted forms of bourgeois democracy can be used by the working class to make significant advances which endanger their dominant role. In this context, the monopolist bourgeoisie gives up to all its pretensions of favouring freedom, equality and fraternity, it rejects constitutional liberties, and supports wholeheartedly the establishment of fascist regimes resting on a system of terror directed against the working class and its political parties. The old bourgeois notion of public liberties is reduced to the freedom of the few to speculate and exploit. That is the kind of freedom that requires terror as a counterpart.

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DAVID BYRNE

The 1930 'Arab riot' in South Shields: a race riot that never was

INTRODUCTION

The North Shields Community Development Project covers the area in which all the West African and West Indian seamen described in S.F. Collins early book on race relations lived.[1] Their 'Anglo-coloured' offspring are a significant element in the population today, albeit a small one. In our general work race has never been a major issue. The black population has been absorbed into the poor working-class population as a whole. The considerable integration of the seamen into the Minority Movement, as shown up by this study, and into the North Shields Unemployed Workers' Movement (not described in any detail here) was in part instrumental in this. The National Front have had no success in North Shields and were effectively hammered by a well-organized anti-fascist campaign at the time of the 1974 general election.

This account of the particular events of the 1930s arose out of a general investigation into the maritime basis of North Shields as a community. In particular it seemed to us that the casual employment structure generated by that base remains of massive significance, and that the rather special characteristics of shipping capital as a whole have a great deal to do with the structural decline of North and South Shields and the enormous problems faced by the working-class people in these areas today. Although race is not a major issue in contemporary terms, the exploration of the events of the 1930s is

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useful as a way of obtaining a model for use elsewhere and as a contributing element in looking at class formation in this sort of setting.

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The 'riot' that took place on the Mill Dam Quay on 2 August 1930 was an episode in the prehistory of race relations in this country, when the only non-white population of any significance lived in the port areas of Liverpool, Cardiff, Hull, the north-east and the East End. But it is of particular significance in that it illustrates the role of the state, the employers and the official union in using race to defuse a political issue. The episode has always been described as a race riot. Collins refers to it as such in two early articles on race relations and in his book based on field work in the two Shields.[2] The racial element was stressed in press accounts of the time,[3] and as recently as 1971 an 'all our yesterdays'-style article in the Newcastle Sunday *Sun* described the episode in racial terms under the heading: 'Charge of the Blue Brigade against Holy War'.[4] In fact, the riots in port towns in 1930 differ markedly from their precursors in 1919[5] and the difference lies in the role of the Seamen's Minority Movement* and the character of the struggle against the PC5.†

Arab and Somali seamen seem to have first settled in South Shields in the 1860s. None settled in North Shields, although they occasionally shipped out from there, and the coloured seamen on the North Bank were West African and West Indian, Chinese and Japanese. In addition, there were Russian, Scandinavian, Maltese, Greek, Spanish and Italian seamen shipping out of the ports. At one time or another boarding houses and/or cafes for all these nationalities existed in the two ports. In the 1930s the two ports were separate in that there was a shipping and a union office on the Mill Dam Quay at South Shields and another pair on the New Quay at North Shields. The distinction was of some significance in that men tended to sign on at one or the other and this 'specialism' had backing in terms of the National Maritime Board rules.

As in all UK ports, the numbers of non-UK-born seamen increased massively during the first world war as a significant proportion of native seamen were sailing in the Royal Navy, minesweepers or Q ships. The shortage of seamen was made up by recruiting non-enemy aliens, i.e., Greeks, Spaniards and, above all, Scandinavians, and by the importation of coloured British subjects. Indeed the press was full of praise for the efforts of the local Islamic community leaders for

*The seamen's section of the national Minority Movement, which was a rank and file workers' organization with strong Communist Party influence, existed in Britain between the wars.

†Seamen had to obtain this form from the National Union of Seamen to show that they were fully paid up members before they could ship out of British ports.

their patriotic efforts in this direction, and at one time there were over 2,000 Arab seamen in South Shields. These men were almost exclusively stokehold crew, i.e., firemen and trimmers — almost all Tyne-engaged deck crews were white. It was not customary to ship a mixed stokehold crew, although West Africans and West Indians quite frequently shipped as part of an otherwise white crew. Indeed the Negro seamen were far less separated from the general body of seamen than the Arabs, and Negro petty officers, e.g. carpenters, sometimes shipped with a crew that included white deckhands and firemen. All seamen shipping from the Tyne were normally members of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) and wage rates were the same for all crew signing articles, regardless of race.

In February 1919 the Tyne had a race riot as did other UK ports. The following account is pieced together from the contemporary coverage in the local paper, the Shields *Daily Gazette*. On 5 February Arab seamen were 'turned down' for signing on at the Mill Dam. Nine men had been engaged at a boarding house to sign on as a stokehold crew by a ship's second engineer. This was quite normal procedure, but was much resented by white seamen when jobs were scarce, as they were in 1919, because it was believed that the Arab lodging house masters paid backhanders to the second engineers. This almost certainly occurred, but Arabs were often engaged because they had a reputation for sobriety, docility and cleanliness. In particular, they could be made to work overtime without being paid for it.

In any event the men turned up at the union office and paid £2 each to clear their books with the Union. Members of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union (and later of the NUS) had to pay 1s a week subscription, in work or not. Their union books had to be up to date before they could ship out, and if they were more than a few weeks in arrears they had to pay a flat fee of £2. After the men had paid their £2, an official of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union said that the men should have been selected at the pen and not at a boarding house. The engineer then went outside and started to select white men. At the subsequent assize court hearing it emerged that this was not normal practice. While all this was going on J.B. Fye, an official of the Cooks and Stewards Union, incited the crowd against the Arabs. At the magistrates court hearing of 11 February, where Fye was convicted of using language likely to cause a breach of the peace, it was said that this crowd consisted mainly of foreign whites and stress was laid on the fact that the Arab seamen were British subjects. Fye struck one of the Arabs who retaliated, and the crowd chased the Arab seamen back to Holborn, the Arab quarter. On reaching Holborn the Arabs rallied and were joined by some of their compatriots armed with revolvers. They fired over the heads of the white mob and chased them back to the Mill Dam where the Arabs smashed up the shipping office and beat up the two union officials.

The police were unable to cope with the situation and called in an army patrol and a patrol of blue-jackets from ships in the harbour. The two naval officers commanding the latter seem to have resolved the situation without further violence and the Arabs returned to Holborn. Twelve Arabs were arrested and were committed to Durham Assizes for trial on charges of rioting, etc. Three were acquitted and none of the nine convicted received heavy sentences. Indeed, the judge expressed a certain amount of sympathy with the men. None were deported.

At about this time the Islamic Society in London sent an Indian Muslim lawyer, described by the Shields *Daily Gazette* as resembling the English public school boy type, to smooth things over. The local paper published a long interview with him and he was feted by local dignitories. In general his demand that Arab British subjects should be given preference to neutrals in British ships was endorsed by the local establishment, a fact probably not unconnected with the strong union commitment to Scandinavian seamen.

All in all the 1919 events were much like those in other ports, except that the Arabs seem to have given as good as they got. The riot was followed by an extraordinary incident involving a fight between Arab seamen and two British soldiers, one of whom was a Syrian and claimed that he spoke Arabic and understood that the Arabs had threatened to murder him as he walked past them. This Arabic-speaking non-Arab Syrian Northumberland fusilier got no further than the magistrates court, and after this things quietened down.

However, during the 1920s there were major developments, involving both the status of Arab seamen and the NUS (formed from the amalgamation of the Seamen and Firemen, and Cooks and Stewards). That affecting the seamen was the consequence of two orders under the Aliens Act — the Aliens Order 1920 and the Special Restriction (Coloured) Alien Seamen's Order 1925. The significant part of the former was Part II, Section 12, pt. 6b, which permitted the issuing of a deportation order for any alien who was certified by a court of summary jurisdiction to have 'within three months from the time at which proceedings for the certificate are commenced been in receipt of parochial relief or been found wandering without visible means of sustenance'. This was not to be used until 1930 and then was employed in South Shields alone, but the provisions of the second order were what made its application possible.

Kenneth Little has described how the Cardiff police applied the 1925 order to coloured British seamen and destroyed their British passports and other evidences of nationality.[6] On Tyneside almost all the Negro seamen were British nationals, but the status of the Arabs was unclear. Both Arabs and Somalis came from British-administered territories, but the latter were defined as British protected persons and therefore sometimes, incorrectly, treated as aliens. Arabs who

could prove that their birthplace was Aden were, it seems, classified as British subjects. Those who could not were classified as aliens. Records of the South Shields Chief Constables Reports are incomplete, but table 1 gives what data I have been able to extract.

Table 1: *Aliens and coloured alien seamen in South Shields*

	Coloured alien seamen			*Total other aliens*	*Total other male aliens*
	Total	*Deportations*	*Repatriations*		
1931	473	58	12	735	473
1932	447	5	6	757	400
1933	394	1	6	443	376
1934	–	–	–	–	–
1935	440 (+232 at sea)	1	14	376	322
1936	259 (+161 at sea)	0	9	344	290
1937	144 (+163 at sea)	2	11	307	260
1938	128 (+140 at sea)	0	29	275	229
1939	132 (+110 at sea)	0	34	290	229
1940	–	–	–	–	–
1941	–	–	–	–	–
1942	–	–	–	–	–
1943	–	–	–	–	–
1944	68 (+139 at sea)	0	0	503	284

Source: Chief Constables Reports, South Shields.

Clearly most of the Arabs on the Tyne were classified as coloured alien seamen, including many living, probably married, outside the boarding houses. Little describes the impact of this in the 1920s and the changes contingent on shipping legislation developments in the 1930s in Cardiff, and it seems clear from the local press that the same process was occurring in South Shields. Some confusion always arose locally because many seamen referred to Somalis as Arabs. Almost all the Somalis were Arabic speakers (in addition speaking Somali), and the two communities did mix in a fashion, as Collins describes. However, the Somalis were generally treated as British subjects and stokehold crews were usually totally Somali or totally Arab.[7]

Developments in the history of the NUS during the 1920s were complex. The two seamen's unions, Seamen and Firemen and Cooks and Stewards, amalgamated largely due to the financial difficulties of the latter. In 1926 Havelock Wilson refused to allow the NUS to participate in the general strike and this, coupled with the NUS's financial support of the non-political miners union, ultimately led to its expulsion from the TUC, largely due to the intransigence of Wilson who rejected a fairly frantic attempt by the TUC leadership to reach some sort of compromise. Wilson also endeared himself to his

membership in the 1920s by his action in *offering* a wage-cut of £1 per month to the owners at a meeting of the industry's negotiating body, the National Maritime Board. Very reluctantly the TUC commissioned Ernie Bevin and the Transport & General Workers' Union (T&GWU) to set up a seafarers section. Bevin did establish this, but against his will — largely because he realized that any such section in the T&GWU would be dominated by the Seamen's Minority Movement, established in October 1927 as the seamen's section of the Transport Workers Minority Movement. The leading elements of this group were members of the Communist Party and Bevin was extremely anxious to keep them out of the T&GWU. He therefore devoted his energies not to rivalling the NUS but to getting it back into the TUC. The NUS paid £10,000 compensation to the T&GWU, which then wound up its seamen's section.

Thus, by 1930 the Minority Movement was essentially a militant seamen's pressure group relating to the NUS. Its leadership firmly stated that it was not a rival union, but many members (and seamen in general) were not 'financial members' of the NUS because of the PC5 and associated subscription rules, which had the effect of excluding members who were not fully paid up, from official union activities. Indeed the PC5 was the major target of the Minority Movement, who referred to it as a slave ticket. No seamen could ship without a PC5, and this gave the union leadership and officials enormous hold over the membership. The £2 required to get a PC5 could be as much as three-quarters of an advance note.* The subscription rules in the NUS meant that very few seamen on shore were actually financial members of the Union and meetings were dominated by the full-time officials who used pensioners to carry the votes. The Union was extraordinarily over-officialled. Officials were much better paid than working seamen and it is generally agreed that in the 1930s the NUS was effectively a company union for the British Shipping Federation.

The Arab seamen on the Tyne were all members of the NUS. Indeed they were traditionally among the strongest supporters of the Union. In his militant days before the first world war, Havelock Wilson had always stressed the importance of the coloured seamen and taunted white seamen for allowing the Union to be run by the coloured men's subscriptions. A letter written to the Shields *Daily Gazette* in 1930[8] observed that the Arabs had always been 'Wilson's particular pets'. Most of the unmarried Arabs lived in boarding houses and the position of the boarding house master was particularly strong in the community. Collins describes the role of these men in the 1940s as that of banker, job finder and general mediator between the seamen and the white world. Most of the boarding house masters were married to white wives, as indeed were

*That is, the proportion of wages a seaman received on signing on.

almost all married coloured seamen. I have not gone into detail about the sexual element in coloured-white rivalry as Collins covers this fully, but the all male character of the coloured communities was of considerable importance.[9] The boarding house masters in fact played a very typical role, found wherever rural migrants come into an urban society, but it was one open to attack on several grounds. First, they were often accused of crimping — that is, abducting or shanghaing seamen. In fact, by the 1930s crimping was unknown. There was no shortage of seamen, only of jobs, but white seamen's lodging houses were notorious for crimping before 1914 and some of the old mud still stuck. Secondly, they were accused of taking a percentage of the pay of men they shipped out; and thirdly, they were accused of bribing engineers to ship Arab crews. The last two accusations are almost certainly correct, although as we shall see the financial return an Arab boarding house master got from his lodgers was associated with very definite reciprocal obligations to them. So far as backhanders went, their existence is readily admitted to by Minority Movement members still alive, who in fact tried hard to stop this practice precisely because of the hostility it aroused among white seamen.[10]

All these elements were significant in the 1930 disturbances, but two further factors have to be taken into account. These were the high level of unemployment among seamen in 1930, a year in which a substantial proportion of British tonnage was laid up, and the administrative separation between port offices in North and South Shields. These factors contributed to a genuine racial disturbance in early 1930 in North Shields. but the role of the NUS in fomenting this was considerable. The March edition of the NUS's official journal, *The Seamen*, had carried an article attacking the Arab seamen, and the boarding house masters in particular. The theme was that the latter were importing large numbers of non-British Arabs from the Yemen illegally and that these men were taking British jobs. In a letter published in the Shields *Daily Gazette* on 29 April, Arthur Field, of the East-West circle, claimed that the NUS was attacking the Arab seamen in an effort to distract attention from the general high level of unemployment among seamen. The same day the steamer *Cape Verde* signed on a crew at the New Quay, North Shields. This ship had traditionally carried a coloured stokehold crew and thirteen Somalis were brought over from South Shields to sign on as firemen, trimmers and donkeymen. Strictly speaking this was wrong, as under the National Maritime Board agreement a ship was supposed to sign on her crew from seamen in the port if any were available, and South Shields and North Shields were administratively separate ports. However, men regularly crossed the river, although there was a traditional hostility to the South Shields Arabs at North Shields. Although the men concerned were Somalis, the crowd of unem-

ployed men regarded them as Arabs. There had been previous trouble with Arabs from South Shields on 25 March when, following a demonstration by unemployed white firemen, the second engineer of the *Moristar* was obliged to engage a white stokehold complement rather than Arabs. There had been no violence on that occasion.

The unemployed white seamen tried to prevent the Arabs from signing by blocking the way to the Union Office. The Somalis drew knives and razors and a mêlée ensued. At the subsequent assize court trial the judge ruled that the coloured men had been intimidated but not attacked. The press reports on the day of the riot, however, suggested that the men were actually manhandled before they used weapons. Reinforcements of coloured men came over from South Shields on the ferry but were turned back by the North Shields police and the actual fighting seems to have been over very quickly. Only Somalis were arrested and one at least was badly beaten up. Three were subsequently imprisoned and deported.

Letters in the two local papers following this incident are of considerable interest. The straight racialist position was put by J. Hogg in a letter to the Shields *Daily News* in which, referring to another topic of great contemporary concern, he stated that 'the import of coloured seamen and firemen is a more serious menace to the health of the community than parrots and lovebirds and should be prohibited'.[11] Swiftsure, a Seamen's Minority Movement spokesman, commented in the Shields *Daily Gazette* that the Arabs should not have been imported from South to North Shields as this was in breach of the imported labour clause of the National Maritime Board agreement, given that there were sufficient firemen available in North Shields. He went on:

> Surely the Arabs could not be blamed for taking a job when it was offered to them. It is hard lines that they should have to suffer through official action, and the policy which has been adopted by the N.U.S. to bring about racial feeling with the object of gradually severing the Arabs and coloured seamen from British Ships and ultimately from the N.U.S.[12]

In the *Gazette* of 2 May Sydney G. Le Touzel, manager of *The Seamen*, replied to Field's earlier criticism. Le Touzel claimed that the NUS campaign was:

> only being conducted against alien coloured seamen who came into this country or are smuggled in by the Arab boarding house keepers in order that they may become money-making machines for those same boarding house keepers. I have said time after time that we have no quarrel with British coloured men, Arabs or otherwise, but with the unregistered and alien coloured men who are expressly forbidden entrance to this country by the order in council in 1925.

Le Touzel pointed out that, at the time of writing, 4 million tons of British shipping was laid up and 20,000 British seamen were idle. The burden of Le Touzel's letter was directed very specifically against the boarding house keepers. 'The Arab boarding house keepers we consider parasites, and we of this Union intend to eliminate them as they are, in our view, crimps, purely and simply.' However, he left space for a dig at half-caste children, referring to Cardiff MP Arthur Henderson's stated position that 'their potentialities seem to be confined to becoming "dole aspirants".' 'Fairplay' and 'Future' wrote letters advocating the removal of Arabs from British ships on the grounds that they were uncivilized and mercenary, but Swiftsure in another letter reiterated the Minority Movement position that the conditions of seamen were the real issue. He went on:

> I contended in my previous letter that the N.U.S. could have prevented the riot which took place at North Shields but have adopted the policy of stirring up racial feelings for the purpose of creating conditions where seamen will be fighting for jobs so as to pave the way for the shipowners to force a further reduction of wages on the seamen and to keep them divided and so prevent the seamen from putting a United front against the attack which is going to be made on the already low wages and bad conditions existing.[13]

The debate continued to rage with comments coming in from ships officers that Arabs were better able to stand the heat in stokeholds. To this, 'Donkeyman' replied that it must be about time that we had Arab engineers because engine-rooms are hotter than stokeholds. S.L.W., an engineer, commented that he had never had to carry an Arab stokehold crew on board and do their work until they sobered up. Quite apart from this debate Swiftsure wrote a long letter which was published on 9 May. His central points related to the programme of the Minority Movement, but he also distinguished between coloured seamen shipping from British ports and coolies and lascars carried by, among others, the Inchcape combine, who were paid only 30s a month. He suggested that the NUS should have looked at this low wage question long ago. On 12 May there was an interesting letter from Captain T.M. Henricksen in which he commented on the iniquities of the PC5 and effectively recommended a repeat of the strike of June 1911 to deal with them. After this the debate seems to have died down until 27 May when Swiftsure wrote in connection with another article on coloured men in *The Seamen*. He pointed out that the Union was trying to create the impression that coloured men shipping from UK ports were undercutting the white men's rate. This was untrue and the NUS was doing nothing about the real issue of foreign engaged lascars and coolies. During this time the Minority Movement made a regular practice of speaking at the Mill Dam.

Meanwhile, the NUS and the British Shipping Federation had responded to a suggestion made by the Secretary for the Board of Trade in reply to a question from Tynemouth's MP, Mr West Russell. The Minister, W. Graham, stated on 7 May that he had obtained a report on the system of registering Arabs and other Asiatics which was employed by the British Consul-General at Antwerp in connection with applications for employment on British ships in that port. He would readily consider suggestions for the introduction of a similar system at home ports. One of the greatest Parliamentary opponents of the boarding house keepers was J.R. Clynes, the Labour Home Secretary. Arthur Henderson, also Labour, urged British owners to 'prefer' British seamen. On 10 May Margaret Bonfield, Minister of Labour, in reply to a question from West Russell stated that 22,346 British seamen were unemployed, including 2,051 at North and South Shields where unemployment had increased from 1,221 a year earlier. The essence of the registration scheme was that Arab and Somali seamen had to produce evidence of British nationality or of their presence on British ships at the time of the Coloured Seamens Order of 1925. The scheme applied to both aliens and British and involved registration and the establishment of a rota from which men would be shipped in turn. This gave the NUS a very considerable degree of control over the Arab and Somali seamen.

There was no further press coverage or correspondence until 8 July when William Harrison, Secretary of the Seamen's Minority Movement, wrote to the Shields *Daily Gazette* about the rota system. He stated that a mass meeting of Arab seamen had been held and he was writing on their behalf to state that they rejected the rota, and in addition were not prepared to be used against white seamen as strike breakers. The Arabs also rejected accusations of corrupt practices such as buying jobs from boarding house masters, an allegation which had been repeated in *The Seamen* of 2 July.

Attempts to introduce the rota through the medium of the boarding house keepers met with a total lack of success. The scheme was due to be introduced on 1 August and on 21 July the NUS and the Shipping Federation called a meeting under the auspices of the National Maritime Board to present its advantages to Arab and Somali boarding house keepers. The next day, the *Gazette* carried letters from Ali Said and Ahmed Alwin denouncing the scheme. Said scathingly commented that the NUS, after having denounced the boarding house keepers as parasites, were now asking them to persuade the Arab seamen to accept the rota. He concluded: 'I want to make it clear that the coloured seamen are not going to accept the rota system. They are going to support the White seamen and not be used against them.' The NUS claimed that the rota had been accepted by coloured men in other ports, notably in South Wales, and produced minutes of an NUS meeting in Barry at which the rota

had been agreed to. Ali Said promptly contacted the Cardiff Arabs and established that no Arabs or Somalis had been present at the meeting. Peter O'Donnell said that the meeting had in fact been packed by pensioners who voted as they were told to in order to preserve their pension rights. In the meantime the Minority Movement had started their campaign against the PC5.

From this time on, in addition to coverage in the generally unsympathetic local papers,[14] the Shields events were fully covered in the *Daily Worker* and a more comprehensive account of events can be attempted from press sources. The Minority Movement held a big meeting at the Mill Dam on 24 July and meetings here were to be the central element in their strategy throughout the dispute. There were speakers from the Communist Party and the Minority Movement, with Ali Said representing the Arabs and Somalis. The men stated that they were not on strike. Rather, they were fully prepared to ship out but were not prepared to accept the PC5 to do so. Neither were the coloured seamen prepared to accept the rota. They hoped to achieve their objective by peaceful picketing and persuasion. At this meeting it was stated that 1,100 white seamen in South Shields and 900 Arabs and Somalis were supporting the boycott of the PC5.[15] On 23 July, during the picket, the Shields *Gazette* carried an interview with Thompson, the national organizer of the Seamen's Minority Movement, who claimed the support of 2,500 members in the Seamen's Minority Movement nationally, of whom 800 were at Shields.

It seems that passive picketing proved unsuccessful, and at a meeting reported in the *Gazette* of 28 July O'Donnell proposed that passive picketing should be replaced by forcible efforts to prevent scabs shipping out. This seems to have had a better effect, although the versions of subsequent events given in the local papers, on the one hand, and in the *Daily Worker*, on the other, differ markedly. Thus on 31 July the *Gazette* claimed that steamships *Tacoma City* and *Holystone* had had no difficulty in obtaining crews, whereas the *Daily Worker* claimed that only eight scabs had signed on. On the previous day the *Daily Worker* had carried a story stating that the engineer of the *Gothic* had been willing to ship men without the PC5 but had been refused permission from the Shipping Federation. By 1 August things were hotting up. The *Gazette* carried a report by a special correspondent on the role of the communists in the Minority Movement, and the *Daily Worker* announced that there were sympathy strikes in Liverpool, Barry and Stepney where men were refusing the PC5. Clearly the Shields dispute was a considerable test for the Minority Movement and a severe challenge for the NUS. The leadership of the Seamen's Minority Movement were putting all their efforts into the north-east ports and efforts were made to spread the refusal of the PC5 to North Shields, Sunderland and Blyth. The Shields

Daily News was scathing about these efforts, but they do seem to have met with some response.[16] It was the bank holiday weekend, picketing continued and on Monday 2 August, the crunch came.

Runciman's vessel the *Linkmoor* had paid off at South Shields and was, as was the custom, re-engaging the crew paid off. The stokehold complement on this vessel consisted of Arabs and when they presented themselves for re-engagement, they refused to get a PC5 or register on the rota. Similar proceedings occurred with another vessel, the *Ethelfredd*. The NUS and Shipping Federation then attempted to engage white firemen. Two scabs, Bradford and Hamilton, who were accused by the Minority Movement of being NUS 'plants', went forward to engage and, according to the Minority Movement men's evidence at their subsequent trial, Hamilton taunted the men on picket duty and waved a whip at them. Bradford was stated to be armed with a razor. According to the evidence of an NUS official, Harrison of the Minority Movement then turned to the crowd and shouted that he was ashamed of being a Britisher because 'the Arabs are standing out 100 per cent and the white men are still signing on'. The picket then moved forward in an effort to prevent the scabs reaching the office and were promptly baton-charged by the police who were present on the quay in force. The police seemed to single out the Arabs for attack and, although there was some retaliation and some policemen were quite seriously injured, the police seem to have broken up the picket quite quickly. Apparently only Arabs were arrested at the quay. The white men from the committee of action were arrested at their homes that night. Almost all press coverage portrayed the episode as a race riot. Indeed, as the *Daily Worker* put it, 'Press efforts to treat the fight as a "racial riot", are an outstanding distortion of the facts designed to conceal a desperate effort to break the strike.' On 4 August the men arrested appeared in court. The charges included inciting a riot and riotous assembly. The accused included not only British members of the Minority Movement and Arabs, but also a Belgian and a Dutch seaman.

Chief Constable Wilkie was quoted in the Newcastle *Journal* as saying: 'Today has seen the first real test of the Minority Movement.'[17] Quite apart from the main charges relating to the 'riot', O'Donnell was charged on 8 August with intimidating R.W. Coverdale who had signed a PC5 form. It appears that Coverdale was a former militant who had in fact introduced O'Donnell to the Minority Movement — O'Donnell had been badly shocked to see him cross the picket line. The actual threat was trivial and O'Donnell was only fined £2.

On the previous day Fred Thompson of Leytonstone, the national organizer of the Seamen's Minority Movement, was charged with conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace and obstructing the police at the Mill Dam. Thompson had been attempting to address a

meeting of seamen and to collect evidence on the riot. The police had refused to allow him to speak, claiming powers under a South Shields bye-law which required the issuing of permits to hold public meetings. Thompson claimed that the police were trying to intimidate seamen and were even 'picketing' the entrance to the Minority Movement's premises in an effort to frighten men away. The case against Thompson was dismissed, but the magistrates 'warned him off', and subsequently T. Thirlbeck, the leader of the Sunderland Seamen's Minority Movement, was fined £2 for conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace for speaking at the Mill Dam. The Minority Movement continued to fight a guerrilla free-speech campaign in South Shields well into the autumn. They also made a regular habit of speaking on the New Quay at North Shields and seem to have been instrumental in preventing trouble when the *SS Spencer* engaged an Arab stokehold complement there (the men were the re-engaged previous crew) on 25 September.[18] These men had PC5s and had signed the rota — clearly by this date the Minority Movement campaign had been defeated in terms of the specific demands for the abolition of the PC5 and the rota.

The men charged after the 'riot' were all tried at Durham Assizes in November. At the trial John Dowell claimed: 'The police wanted just the provocation that Hamilton and Bradford provided to give them an excuse for instituting a reign of terror arresting the Minority Movement leaders and dividing the seamen.' The judge summed up in a fashion very hostile to the accused. All the men were found guilty. The judge stated that he regarded Harrison, O'Donnell and Dowell as tools of the real agitators. Sentences ranged from 3 to 16 months, and the majority of the Arab seamen were also deported.

In the meantime, the position of the unemployed Arab and Somali seamen in South Shields was becoming desperate. The rota was a serious restriction on their ability to get work, exactly as it had been intended to be, and the local Public Assistance Committee (PAC) refused to give any outdoor relief. In this the South Shields PAC was the most severe of any seaport. In Cardiff payments of 5s per week were made direct to boarding house masters for each unemployed coloured seaman who was not a recent arrival. This payment was especially calculated as a base payment for food without any regard for lodgings.

> The system continued for 6-7 months when application was made by the Council in certain selected cases for certificates of deportation under the aliens order. Thereupon the boarding house keepers approached the Committee and undertook to remove the Arab seamen from chargeability if the Committee would take no further action to deport them, and on the Committee agreeing, the relief was discontinued.[19]

In South Shields the coloured men decided to follow the example of Durham miners and force the PAC's hand by entering the work-house. In the 1920s, the North Eastern Guardians' threat of the work-house for unemployed miners had been met by literally thousands of men simultaneously presenting themselves and swamping out the system. On 25 September forty-five Arabs were admitted to Harton Institution and over the next couple of days the numbers rose to 97. This caused enormous consternation, but the Shields *Daily Gazette* in an editorial assured its readers that the business-like men who ran the PAC would deal with the affair in a business-like fashion. Their first business-like move was to bring the Arabs, who had at first been allowed to leave the work-house to seek work, under the strict regime that was enforced for casuals — that is tramps of no fixed abode.[21] Arrangements were made for work for seamen to be notified from the Mill Dam and only the required number of men would be permitted to go out to seek it. Colonel Chapman, the Chairman of the PAC, tried to calm down fears of an invasion of destitute Arabs. He stated that there were only 563 Arabs, Somalis and Indians in South Shields — ninety were permanent residents, 470 were seamen registered on the rota and of these 132 had ships.

After the imposition of the 'casual' regime the Arab seamen left Harton and one was subsequently charged with obtaining relief under false pretences when he was observed to change a £5 note in an East Holborn shop. He got three months and deportation. Although the PAC tried to make out that it was the imposition of the casual regime which led to the men leaving, in fact the men left on 3 October, the day after a special PAC meeting at which it was resolved to seek deportation orders under the relevant provisions of the 1920 Aliens Order. In December 1930 it was stated that in forty-three cases the magistrates court had issued the necessary certificates. Clearly the rest of the men were able to claim British nationality, an illustration of the way in which registration under the 1925 order was being imposed on British subjects in South Shields. Fifty-eight Arabs were deported from South Shields in 1931, including some of those sentenced in November and forty-three men dealt with under the Public Assistance procedure. These moves had a deterrent effect and throughout the 1930s the Arab seamen seem to have depended on the boarding house keepers for support.

However, the Minority Movement still continued their activity in the north-east and were constant opponents of racial discrimination against the Arabs. Then in July 1931, white seamen tried to prevent Arab seamen signing on the Sutherland Steamship Company's vessel *Caithness*, which had always carried a coloured stokehold complement. The deck ratings were Shetlanders and refused a request from the white firemen not to sign on with Arabs. The Arabs were

prevented by the white men from obtaining their PC5s and things looked set for a repetition of the April 1930 disturbances, when Alex Robson of the Minority Movement got up and told the white men that the Arabs were members of the Union and were as entitled to ship out as they were. The Shields *Daily News* made some facile comments about Robson having competition from a racing tipster who attempted to shout him down, but as Robson was, among other things, the former feather-weight champion of Great Britain, the confrontation seems slightly implausible. Anyway, he clearly prevented any disturbances.[22]

I can trace no subsequent episodes in the 1930s, but in the post second world war period the NUS was up to its old tricks again. Thus in 1948 J. Ockleton, the North-East Coast secretary of the NUS spoke at the Union's Annual General Meeting of the need to check coloured men from coming into the country to go to sea. He stated: 'In quite a few instances we have been successful in changing ships from "coloured" to "White" and in many instances in persuading masters and engineers that white men should be carried in preference to coloured.'[23] A meeting of the Shields coloured seamen was promptly called with Communist Party support to condemn Ockleton's statement, and Ockleton promptly replied that he was only against 'new' entrants and not existing residents. In any case, in this period there was an overall shortage of seamen and in the post-war period the position of coloured men on British articles* and shipping from British ports has not been an issue.

What is an issue is the continued extension of the lascar/coolie system to the point where roughly half of all ratings on British registered ships are non-members of the NUS, paid rates approximately a quarter of the British rate. The NUS, which is now dominated by former members of the seamen's reform movement, the lineal descendant of the Minority Movement, is challenging this, for example, by demanding the engagement of West Indian seamen from Barbados who are NUS members on the very profitable Caribbean cross-trades. However, the Union receives an annual payment from the British Council of Shipping (the successor to the federation) for every non-European articled man engaged and this has led to its independence being challenged before the appropriate Registrar. In the past two years there has been a very high level of unemployment among British seamen. Re-entry to the shipping industry is now virtually impossible and the position is particularly bad for engine-room ratings. However, the NUS has made no distinction between its white, coloured and Anglo-coloured members. Certainly there are no signs of any discrimination against black seamen in the North East.

*The contract signed under the Merchant Shipping Acts by seamen shipping out of British ports.

The treatment of coloured seamen in British ports in the 1930s by the Union, the employers, the police and the PACs was singularly dirty. The only people to come out of the 1930 episode in South Shields with any credit were those who were subsequently jailed and/or deported and their supporters. Certainly the courageous fight by rank-and-file seamen on the programme of the Minority Movement was the only real alternative to the dangerous tactics of the NUS, and it was thanks to these men that attempts by the British Union of Fascists to exploit the situation later in the 1930s were prevented. Alex Robson, for example, was jailed for breaking up a fascist meeting, but clearly a lot of the ground-work had been laid by the earlier work on seamen's issues and in the National Unemployed Workers Movement, of which Robson and others from the Seamen's Minority Movement were prominent members. These men were generally blacklisted by the shipping companies throughout the 1930s and only got back to sea on the outbreak of war, when almost all of them went into TS 141X branch of the Royal Navy which was especially created for merchant navy ratings manning armed merchant cruisers, etc. Robson, for example, was engaged directly as a chief-petty officer in this division.

The shipping industry in Britain was the first to bring in black and Arab labour to solve its manpower problems. These men were brought into an industry where workplace and residence are indistinguishable during a voyage. They were brought in without families. The men themselves had a first rate tradition as strong union supporters, and indeed there is no record of coloured seamen black-legging on whites in any dispute in the North East. However, they remained vulnerable in periods when competition for jobs was severe, and the general dominance of imperialist ideology in this period served to enhance their vulnerability. I have not gone into this, or into the related issues of 'mongrelization' of the British people which so concerned letter writers to the local papers, in any detail, but certainly the content of these letters is such as to support entirely the emphasis given by May and Cohen to these factors in their discussion of the Liverpool riots of 1919. This article has been a report of events and further analysis is clearly necessary.

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3 Both in the national and local press, e.g., the *Daily Worker* accused the *Daily Herald* of playing up this angle.
4 19 September 1971
5 See R. May and R. Cohen, 'The Interaction between race and colonialism; a case study of the Liverpool race riots of 1919' (*Race & Class*, Vol.16, no.2, 1975)

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7 The hazy borders between Aden and the protectorates and the Yemen, and between British and French Somaliland were used to justify the treatment of both groups as aliens. Unless an Arab or Somali could produce positive proof of birth in Aden or British Somaliland he was treated as an alien.
8 A.B. in the issue of 28 July 1930. This writer supported the Minority Movement and the Arab seamen.
9 See Collins, op.cit., and Little, op.cit., for discussions of this.
10 Communication from Alex Robson.
11 2 May 1930
12 1 May 1930
13 13 May 1930
14 The *Gazette* was noticeably fairer than the *News*, but neither could be described as anything other than anti-Minority Movement.
15 24 July 1930
16 Certainly Arab firemen refused to engage on the *Aik Leaf* at North Shields and this vessel sailed with a white stokehold complement. Some support was raised in North Shields and subsequently North Shields was a stronghold of the Minority Movement.
17 4 August 1930
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20 This point requires further research, particularly into the role of the Unemployment Assistance Board in Shields after the establishment of that body
21 See George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (Harmondsworth, 1969), for a description of the system.
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ANDREW TURTON

Laos: a peasant people's struggle for national liberation

The experiences of the people of Laos offer us many lessons. Laos has been a testing ground for methods of suppression of national liberation struggles throughout the third world. At the same time it has illustrated the most unbelievable resilience and creative ability of ordinary people, in this case an almost entirely peasant society, to win through against such odds.

This article outlines the long and tortuous struggles of the people of Laos against colonial and neo-colonial intervention and oppression, in particular during the last 30 years, up to the new revolutionary stage which began in December 1975. It has special significance in the context of the new situation in neighbouring Thailand, where a coup reimposed a right-wing dictatorship on 6 October 1976. Following the coup hundreds of progressive Thai students, workers and political figures have been forced by reactionary terror tactics to move to Laos or join the armed struggle within Thailand, which is particularly intense in the northern and north-east areas bordering the People's Democratic Republic of Laos.[1]

INTRODUCTION TO THE CURRENT SITUATION

Laos is a landlocked and largely mountainous country. Its longest borders are with Vietnam to the east and with Thailand, across the

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Mekong River, to the west. Cambodia, Burma and the Peoples Republic of China are also neighbouring states. Over 50 per cent of the country and most of the hilly areas are still covered by forest. In surface area it is nearly the size of Britain, but its population of about three million is closer to that of the England of over four centuries ago. Its population is made up of many peoples with distinct cultures and historical traditions. These can be roughly divided into three broad nationality groupings. First, there are those who live high up in the hills (especially the Meo or Hmong people), and those who live on the lower slopes and foothills. These two groups of peoples make up some 40 per cent of the population of Laos. They speak several different languages and are related in many ways to the national minority peoples in the highland areas of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and of the autonomous regions and districts of southern China and, to a lesser extent, to minority peoples of northern Thailand, Burma and southern Vietnam. Formerly they knew no national frontiers and were organized socially in large family units or at most in local confederations of villages. They were sometimes involved in subordinate, tribute-paying relationships with Lao principalities in the valleys, and the Lao people knew them as 'slaves', a term and condition perpetuated by the French colonialists. The third nationality grouping is that of the Lao people, speaking the Lao language and closely related to the people of Thailand, who have lived for centuries along the Mekong river, and in the plains and valleys.

After the 1973 peace agreements, which marked the end of the Indochina wars, Laos formally became a reunited country. The Lao king was recognized as symbolic head of state. But despite this formal unity the country had two distinct political zones. The first, liberated from French colonial and American neo-colonial rule, consisted of at least two-thirds of the territory, including most of the hilly areas and all the areas bordering on Vietnam and China. In this area lived most of the various national minority peoples, who together possibly made up the majority of the population in the liberated zone. The second zone consisted mainly of the lowland areas bordering Thailand, with its political centre in Vientiane. In the liberated zone socialist construction had long been under way under the leadership of the Lao Patriotic Front and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, whereas the Vientiane zone was still very much dominated by the United States and could be considered a neo-colonial enclave within Laos. Despite these quite distinct and sharply contradictory sectors the two political sides jointly formed a Provisional Government of National Union in 1973. But each separately administered its own territory and maintained its own army.

This was clearly a temporary political solution, a provisional

administration, while the people and their political groupings organized themselves in the wake of a devastating war. It served this purpose for about two and a half years. By May 1975, with the defeat and withdrawal of their American support, the right-wing leadership of the Vientiane zone collapsed and many fled to Thailand. In November 1975 the king of Laos voluntarily abdicated and on 1 December 1975 a National Congress of People's Representatives from all areas, classes and nationality groups dissolved all previous state institutions. The People's Democratic Republic of Laos had been established. A new, and it must be hoped, peaceful era had begun for the people of Laos.

French colonial rule and its overthrow

Between 1885-1893 the French established a colonial 'protectorate' over Laos as part of 'French Indochina' (which included Cambodia and Vietnam). While they plundered its natural resources, especially teak, the French kept the country in an extremely backward state economically, socially, politically and culturally. From the start there were sporadic armed rebellions, especially by the hill-dwelling minorities, which were severely suppressed. However, resistance became more organized, and more broadly based, during the Japanese occupation in the Second World War. A Free Lao (*Lao Issara*) movement was formed and after a general insurrection a Provisional Government of an independent Laos was set up in October 1945. Prince Souphannouvong, who is now the President of the new Lao People's Democratic Republic, was Minister of Defence in this government and Commander-in-Chief of its troops. At that time there were two divisions of Chiang Kaishek's Kuomintang army in Laos, and the British army was actively helping to restore French colonial rule in Vietnam. Nevertheless, the French had to reconquer newly-independent Laos by force of arms.

The right wing of the Free Lao movement collaborated with the French, and Prince Souvanna Phouma, who until November 1975 was head of the Vientiane zone, eventually became Prime Minister of a French colonial government. Those of the Free Lao movement who still stood for national independence reorganized and from late 1947 onwards guerrilla zones and bases began to be established with a separate and democratic form of administration. In 1949 the *Lao Issara* was disbanded and a new Free Lao Front (*Neo Lao Issara*) formed. In 1951 a most significant alliance was made between the national independence movements in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam — an alliance reaffirmed at the 1970 Summit Conference of Indochinese Peoples. Lao nationalists fought in a coordinated way with the Viet Minh and shared in defeating the French in campaigns leading up to the final victory over them in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, a

town on the northern Vietnamese border of Laos. Even before Dien Bien Phu the United States was paying for some 80 per cent of the French war, and at the end of 1953 US pilots were actively flying missions against northern Laos. At that time Nixon (then Eisenhower's Vice-President) and Dulles supported a plan to invade north Vietnam.

The formation of the Lao Patriotic Front

The 1954 Geneva agreements on Laos which followed the French defeat were in reality little more than a ceasefire. Although ensuring the withdrawal of most French troops, they contained no precise provisions for a political solution. Nor had the British (Churchill and Eden — Britain was a co-chairman of the Geneva conference) or the US, any intention of keeping to the spirit of the agreements. Indeed, so concerned were they to establish a 'bridgehead' against China that they planned to set up the military anti-communist alliance SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization) *before* the Geneva agreements were signed. Less than two months after the agreements SEATO placed Laos under its 'protective orbit'. Six months later the United States began to introduce a system of parallel government in Laos on a scale far larger than that of French colonial rule. It began a programme of 'aid' which was almost exclusively military and which made Laos the largest recipient (per head of population) of US aid in the world. The agencies for this extraordinary political and administrative structure were the United States Operations Missions (USOM) and Agency for International Development (AID). which in the case of Laos were controlled throughout by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). As commentators have colloquially put it: most foreign countries with which the US has relations are 'State Department [Foreign Office] countries', whereas south Vietnam was in effect, until the US defeat, a 'Defense Department country', but Laos was from the start a 'CIA country' — a fact which helps to explain many subsequent developments.

In response to this new invasion progressive Lao people began to organize and reorganize themselves politically, and on a national scale. Many of the young leaders had been active in the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) when that had been a single party for the three countries of French Indochina (Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam). Early in 1955 they formed an independent Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) which was to provide the critical element of political leadership in the struggles to come, in spite of the fact that it had to maintain a semi-secret form of organization (by 1968 it is reported as having a membership of 14,000, nearly two-thirds of whom were members of minority nationality groups). In 1956 the Lao Patriotic Front (LPF) was established, succeeding to the former Free Lao Front.

This was a broad-based organization which sought to harmonize a divergent range of groups, classes and individuals in a common anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggle. Given the nature of Lao society at the time, membership of these two organizations was overwhelmingly drawn from among the peasantry. The LPF (in Lao the *Neo Lao Haksat*, also known as *Pathet Lao* — Lao nation or Lao nationalists) was also a parliamentary party, had its own armed forces (the Lao People's Liberation Army, LPLA) and controlled large areas of territory — the former guerrilla zones and bases established against the French colonial power.

The two largest political forces were now the Lao Patriotic Front (Chairman, Souphannouvong; deputy head, Faydang Lobliayao, a Meo (Hmong) national minority leader) and what, to anticipate, we may call the 'Royal Lao Government' (RLG) (headed by Souvanna Phouma, half-brother of Souphannouvong). In 1956 and 1957 these two sides worked out what was known as the 10 Point Vientiane Agreement. There was agreement on reunification of the country, neutrality and the formation, after elections, of a government of national union and reconciliation. The Lao Patriotic Front agreed (perhaps mistakenly) to integrate part of its army with the RLG army and to disband the rest. This genuinely Lao political solution was opposed from the start (just as democratic development was suppressed in south Vietnam) by the United States, backed by Britain, France and Thailand. Nevertheless, in May 1958 elections were held in which the Lao Patriotic Front and their allies won 13 out of 21 seats (the LPF stood for only 10 seats and won 9), despite some US $3m spent on electoral subversion. Fearful of this challenge to its imperialist interests in a 'beachhead against communism' the US increased its military aid to the RLG army. In June 1958 the CIA set up a 'committee for the defence of national interests' and invented a new political tendency known as 'anti-communist neutralism', which became the slogan of one Phoui Sananikone whom the CIA had bribed back in 1954 to accept the unsatisfactory Geneva agreements. (He later became head of Souvanna Phouma's 'National Assembly' and his family circle remained one of the ruling cliques on the Vientiane political and economic scene until 1975.) In 1959 Souphannouvong and fifteen other LPF leaders were arrested. They escaped to the liberated areas together with loyal military units. The next year the CIA staged yet another coup, this time backing the extreme right-wing General Phoumi Nosovan.

The American war in Laos

These US interventions in Lao politics led to a new period of military struggle in which American troops began to be involved ('civic action teams' among the Meo in 1960; 'White Star' mobile training teams in

1961). At this time the neutralists found political expression under the uncertain leadership of Kong Le. The Lao Patriotic Front and Patriotic Neutralist forces had made considerable military gains by the time of another ceasefire and attempt at a political solution: the July 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos. This Agreement provided for a tripartite coalition government which gave the LPF equal representation with the right-wing forces of Phoumi Nosovan, but gave the Premiership to Souvanna Phouma as the supposed leader of a third 'neutralist' force. In reality the majority of neutralists had already declared their support for the LPF, and Souvanna Phouma became increasingly identified as leader of the pro-American right. Once again the US clearly had no intention of allowing even this far from satisfactory coalition to work. The attitude of the Kennedy administration of the time was subsequently revealed by Assistant Secretary of State of Far Eastern Affairs Hilsman in 1965: 'We all understood perfectly well that [it] was just the starting gun... If we had ... used the negotiations as an excuse to withdraw from Laos ... we in effect would have been turning it over to the communists.' The tripartite national union government set up in June 1962, was not allowed to survive for long. The US encouraged sabotage, made secret military alliances and undertook the secret training of Lao and Thai pilots in its Special Warfare Units in Thailand and south Vietnam. In April 1964 the tripartite government was overthrown by a right-wing military putsch and replaced by a nominally neutralist government under Prince Souvanna Phouma, which moved steadily to the right until 1973. By July 1964 US and Thai airforce units were directly engaged in operations in Laos. The years of the 'Secret War' had begun: a war to suppress a national liberation movement with the wider aim of discouraging other liberation movements in South-east Asia and of 'containing Communism'.

An important element in US military strategy was the use of a CIA controlled 'secret army' of mercenary soldiers under General Vang Pao, a Meo national who had served his military apprenticeship with the French. At its height this army consisted of some 30,000, mainly Meo, irregulars, almost the same size as the regular RLG army. By 1972 some two-thirds of this force had been destroyed or had deserted, and had been replaced by Thai irregulars, who by 1972 numbered some 20,000 in twenty-six combat battalions. The term mercenary is used advisedly. While the RLG private received approximately US $5-10 per month, the CIA paid Meo irregulars US$30-35 and the Thai irregulars US$75 per month. The combined armed forces of the Lao Patriotic Front (the Lao People's Liberation Army, estimated 48,000 strong in 1970) and Patriotic Neutralists were assisted by their Vietnamese allies; but the total of Vietnamese units committed in their support probably never numbered more than about one-third of the Lao nationalist forces, most of the Vietnamese

units in Laos being committed to the organization and defence of supply routes to southern Vietnam. It must be remembered that the US intervened in Laos not only to thwart the Lao people's own struggle for independence, but also to set up strategic forward bases from Thailand to direct the US war of aggression against the Vietnamese people. For example, the US set up 'secret' radar stations, even within the liberated areas, in order to direct their bombing raids against Vietnam. The Lao and Vietnamese people had a common enemy, a common struggle.

The main aspect of US military strategy in Laos was extermination bombing. Between 1964 and the end of the war nearly three million tons of explosives, napalm, defoliants and other destructive chemicals were dropped, not on conventional military targets, but on people and on forests, fields and crops. This terror bombing was aimed at the disruption and destruction of an entire agricultural population and its means of livelihood. It also had the effect of creating a mass of war evacuees, so-called 'refugees', who either had to flee to the American controlled zone to avoid the bombing or were forced into special camps or into the towns, as a policy of 'urbanization' to defeat a predominantly rural peasant movement. In this way about one-third of the entire population of Laos was uprooted and neutralized.

After the major defeats of US troops in south Vietnam in 1968 the US escalated its aerial war against Laos to scarcely imaginable proportions. In February 1971 the US openly invaded southern Laos with fifty battalions of south Vietnamese troops (part of Nixon's strategy of 'Vietnamizing the war') and 2,000 aircraft. The invasion was massively defeated in the 'Battle of Highway 9' The history of the resistance of the Lao people in this war has not been fully written; when it is, it will surely be one of the most heroic stories of human history. Only a People's Army fighting for national independence could have achieved such a momentous victory, under a revolutionary leadership with a vision of social revolutionary changes which would bring not only freedom, but also justice, equality and a better life for all the nationalities of Laos. This victory dawned in 1973 when all US and Thai troops were required by the Peace Agreement to withdraw from Laos. As just a single index of the scale of the military defeat, the US lost (destroyed and damaged) over 2,500 aircraft in Laos against an enemy that did not use a single combat aircraft.

The 1973 Peace Agreement and the beginning of a new political stage

Aided and encouraged by the victories won by their Vietnamese allies, the Lao Patriotic Front opened talks with the Vientiane government under Souvanna Phouma, the right-wing rump of the 1962 coalition, on 17 October 1972. A ceasefire agreement

(Agreement on Restoring Peace and Achieving National Concord in Laos) was reached on 21 February 1973. During all this time the US did not let up waging its aerial invasions. The Agreement was not however complete until the signing of a more detailed Protocol in September 1973, and after an attempted rightist coup had been defeated. The political and diplomatic achievement of the 1973 Agreements can be gauged to some extent by comparing the texts with that of the 1962 Geneva Agreement, against which they show a considerable advance, and with the two major policy statements of the LPF (the 12 Point Political Programme of 1968, and the 5 Point Political Solution of 1970). The new Agreements correspond closely in points of substance with the principles and policy of the LPF for achieving a 'national-democratic revolution'. The idea of a tripartite government was abandoned; an equal division of political offices at all levels was determined between the LPF and the Vientiane side. A Joint National Political Council (JNPC) was to be set up to work out a political programme. Free and democratic elections were envisaged, to constitute a Government of National Union which should represent all three major nationality groupings, only one of which, the valley Lao, had ever been effectively represented in previous Vientiane governments.

The LPF continued the political struggle with all the skills and discipline forged during the years of people's war. Efforts by the ultra-right to reject the Agreements were defeated. A Provisional Government of National Union (PGNU) and the Joint National Political Council (JNPC) were established by April 1974. Under the chairmanship of Souphannouvong the JNPC became the main focus for political developments, largely bypassing the faction-ridden rump of rightist political organization in Vientiane. The JNPC drew up an 18 Point Political Programme in June 1974, corresponding quite closely to the transitional programme of the LPF, which was unanimously adopted and signed in November 1974.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN LAOS

Laos is an overwhelmingly agricultural country. Some 90 per cent of the population produce primarily for their own needs, mainly in family units of production, with a tradition of cooperation and exchange of labour between households. To a lesser extent they are petty commodity producers. Capitalist relations of production in the countryside (larger units of production, capital investment, wage relationship, etc.) exist only to a very small extent near a few towns in the lowland areas in the Vientiane zone. Yet in spite of its agricultural potential Laos has actually had to import rice, its basic food, due to the distortion of the economy by the war. The annual per capita

income in 1975 was reckoned to be only approximately £25. Despite a recent observation in a western publication that the natural resources of Laos are 'extremely meagre'[2] (presumably so seen because of their unavailability so far for capitalist exploitation), there are considerable resources of timber and tin (the principal exports, as unprocessed raw materials) and also, for example, of coal, iron, copper, lead, potash, gold and precious stones. There are very few industrial enterprises. In 1975 the total working population engaged in (small) industrial undertakings estimated at 30,000. The daily wage in a fairly typical wood factory was 400 Lao *kip* (about 50 US cents) for men and 300 *kip* for women. (These figures are for the Vientiane zone.) This provided a monthly family income of *less* than the 23,000 *kip* per month estimated in *1972* to be the minimum necessary family income. The average family income of wage earners in 1975 was estimated at 10,000 — 15,000 *kip* per month.

The Vientiane zone economy in 1974-5 was characterized by such symptoms as: soaring inflation, food rationing, hoarding, speculation, smuggling, black marketeering, the flight of capital to foreign bank accounts, massive input of US military aid, and a staggering trade imbalance reflecting the import of manufactured western consumer goods, especially luxury items. In 1958 the Lao *kip* was valued at 80 *kip* to the US dollar. In 1974 the official rate was 750 *kip*, with black market rates up to 1,200 *kip* to the dollar. In October 1975 the black market rate had reached 3,400 to the US dollar, with even the (privately-owned) Lao Bank dealing at the black market rate. For the previous ten years a foreign consortium, consisting of the United States, Britain, Japan, France and Australia (Foreign Exchange Operations Fund), attempted to stabilize the currency. The US contributed $27 million in 1973 and in 1975 contributed 70 per cent of the total support fund. In 1973 imports (95 per cent of which came through Thailand) were valued at 19,800 million *kip*, compared with exports at only 1,500 million *kip*. Sixty per cent of all commercial banking business, domestic and foreign, was controlled by the French Bank of Indochina, set up in Laos in 1954. In the Vientiane zone capitalist investment and imperialist 'aid' predominated, with all that that involves in political strings and neo-colonial structures of control and exploitation The largest financial input was still US aid, which in 1974 was $80m for military and only $51m for non-military aid. The provisional US *military* budget for Laos in 1975 actually *increased* to US $99m.

Throughout most of the liberated zone a quite different social and economic situation has prevailed for many years. Although less documentation is available to western observers, certain characteristics can be seen and broad comparisons made. There has been a more stable currency, and a greater self-sufficiency in food. Irrelevant, wasteful and luxury forms of production and consumption have been

avoided. There has been a strong emphasis on the development of agriculture, with land reclamation, the encouragement of minority peoples to engage in settled agriculture, the setting up of professional irrigation teams and the introduction of more double cropping. Traditional methods of cooperation between villagers have been encouraged and built upon. There has also been a greater emphasis on community control of resources, such as livestock, but as yet, there have been no moves towards large-scale collectivization. Handicraft production has been restored and improved, and a number of light industries have been built up, such as weaving, printing, pharmaceuticals, sugar refineries, potteries and mechanical workshops. The conditions of war severely hampered economic progress. For instance many light industries had to be established underground and in caves in order to escape bombing attacks, and much civilian energy must have had to be diverted for porterage, given the nature of the war and the terrain and the lack of modern transport facilities.

Provision of hospitals has increased in the liberated zone: two beds per 1,000 — compared with only one trained doctor when the French left. In 1945 there was only one secondary school, teaching in the French language. Until recently all secondary schools in the Vientiane zone taught in French. In the liberated zone there were fifteen secondary and vocational schools, using the people's own languages and combining school work with agricultural work, as well as three teacher training colleges and one university. But perhaps even more important than quantitative achievements have been the different social policies and the style and quality of social relationships in the liberated zone, notably more egalitarian relationships and the absence of official corruption. Also, of great importance in a country which contains such ethnic variety, there has been a greater tolerance and encouragement of different minority cultures (for instance provision of new scripts and publishing facilities for minorities) while at the same time the racist subordination of minorities has been combatted and all nationality groups encouraged to participate equally in a new multi-national Lao society.

THE RISE OF A POPULAR MOVEMENT IN THE VIENTIANE ZONE

The history of a workers and peasants movement in Laos is principally the history of the Lao Patriotic Front, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, and of the various patriotic and progressive organizations in the liberated zone, for instance of women, intellectuals and Buddhists. But with the 1973 Agreements a number of important social and organizational developments occurred within the

Vientiane zone. The Federation of Students, with some 8,000 members, became especially active in taking a lead and working with peasants and other workers in the Vientiane zone. A teachers' union, with a membership of about 500, was formed in February 1974. Encouraged and safeguarded against repression by the promulgation of the 18 Point Political Programme in mid-1974, students, workers and peasants held intensive discussions, organizing and acting to win better conditions and democratic rights.

In June 1974 a workers' union was formed, representing the 30,000 or so industrial workers in the Vientiane zone, and organized weekly seminars and participated in political negotiations. Its president was a neutralist member of the JNPC. In August 1974 official reports spoke of ten instances *per day* of militant actions by various groups of workers. Many of these actions demanded the expulsion of foreign bosses, including Americans and Thais; others were directed against low pay and bad working conditions.

In May 1975 this combined popular movement, headed by a 'Committee of 21 Organizations', developed even greater momentum, formulating political demands of far-reaching effect. For instance, there was a call for the integration under the control of the PGNU of the six southern provinces of Laos, an area in which semi-feudal relations prevailed and which was formerly regarded as a major bastion of rightist support. There were successful calls for the resignation of a number of old aristocrats, generals and other members of the oligarchy of 'big families' who monopolized the Vientiane side economy and many of the political and bureaucratic offices. Even military cadets of the Vientiane army accused their superior officers of plotting a coup d'état and approved the extension of the presence of Lao Patriotic Front troops in the Vientiane zone. This deployment also had the agreement of Prince Souvanna Phouma who was forced to realize that the right wing had no genuine popular support. Finally, by the end of June 1975 the US AID mission headquarters, long a CIA cover organization, was forced to close down after occupations by militant students, and US officials began to leave the country on the heels of a few thousand Lao 'elite' who had grown fat on US aid while the US ravaged their country.

THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF LAOS

It will be clear by now that the ceasefire agreements of 1973 did not constitute a final victory. The struggle for national liberation was not yet over. Conditions in the neo-colonialist Vientiane side enclave were deteriorating. The right-wing leadership had shown itself to be politically bankrupt, and many had shown where their loyalties lay by

fleeing to Thailand. The US military threat had not been fully removed. It has been shown how, following the 'Nixon doctrine' of using Asian soldiers to fight American wars, the Thai government army had intervened in Laos: in 1975 forces from Thailand kept up sabotage operations against Laos, for instance continuing to supply the remnants of Vang Pao's mercenary army. The Thai government stepped up an economic blockade which at the end of 1975 denied to Laos all imports of petrol, food, manufactured goods and even United Nations agency supplies. There were border clashes and mutual dismissal of diplomats. The Thai government's attitude to progressive developments in Laos was directly related to the threat which it feels from the growing worker peasant movement among Thai people within its own frontiers especially in its northern and north-east region. This region has a border with Laos many hundreds of kilometres long, and its people, for the most part poor and middle-peasants, are historically, culturally and linguistically close to the Lao people of Laos.

In these conditions it is not to be wondered that the revolutionary impetus in Laos should rapidly gather new momentum to a point at which all the old state apparatuses could be overthrown and the Lao People's Democratic Republic be proclaimed on 1 December 1975.

From all accounts this final stage was achieved without bloodshed and received massive and widespread support from all members of all social classes. The former king abdicated voluntarily and has been retained as Supreme Adviser to the President. The former Vientiane zone Prime Minister, Souvanna Phouma, resigned, giving full support to the new Republic in his resignation speech, and he has been retained as Adviser to the new government. A high priority is being given to re-education, especially of former Vientiane side officials, teachers, etc. Re-education sessions often last only a few days and are held in the villages and towns of the former Vientiane zone, though sometimes they last several months and are held in the former liberated zone. By December 1975 a form of people's revolutionary administration had been established in all localities with democratically-elected officials.

A new political, economic and social programme has been outlined. At home plans for economic reconstruction envisage the retention for a period of a small private sector combined with state cooperatives and demonstration centres, and the nationalization of 'all economic and financial bases of the comprador bourgeoisie, particularly those of currently active bureaucrats, warlords and reactionaries serving as henchmen of the US imperialists; to proceed to increase gradually the scope of the economic bases under the control of the masses so as to use them in expanding the national economy' and 'to march forward to socialism'.[3] Looking beyond its frontiers the new Republic aims 'to pursue a foreign policy of

independence, peace, friendship and non-alignment; successfully to make Laos a peaceful, independent, democratic, unified and prosperous country with social progress; and to contribute honourably to the struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress in South-east Asia and the world'.[4]

The principal structures of the new state include the following. There is a People's Supreme Council, with Souphannouvong as President and three Vice-Presidents, one for each of the three major nationality groupings (including Faydang Lobliayao and Sithon Kommadam representing the national minority groupings) and forty-two other members who include nine former members of the Vientiane side. Preparations are under way for elections to a new National Assembly. There are twelve government ministries, mainly headed by persons who have been active in the liberation struggle for some 30 years (the oldest was 66 in 1975), including several members of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (and former ICP activists), many of whom had already been democratically elected in the national elections of 1958 mentioned earlier. The Prime Minister is Kaysone Phonvihane, who for many years has been Secretary-General of the LPRP. Minister of Finance is Nouhak Phoumsavanh, also for many years Deputy Secretary-General of the LPRP. The Minister of Defence is Khantay Siphandone, Commander-in-Chief of the Lao People's Liberation Army. Phoumi Vonvichit, formerly Secretary-General of the Lao Patriotic Front, is Minister of Education, Sport and Religious Affairs. In addition there are two strategic committees: the Committee for State Planning and the Nationalities Committee, and a single National Bank under state control.

An American professor of political science (who acts as a consultant for the US Air Force, USAID, Peace Corps, etc.) wrote in 1973 that 'Laos has not experienced intense economic and social pressures that have contributed, in other Asian countries, to political activism.'[5] In fact, the Lao people have overthrown the combined structures of feudalistic, colonial and neo-colonial exploitation. They have defeated a technologically vastly superior, imperialist enemy which waged a vicious and devastating war of aggression, a war of attempted economic annihilation. The same professor also wrote: 'Lao cultural characteristics do not lend themselves easily to sustained political organization.'[6] In fact, for thirty years Lao peasants and workers, together with nationalists of all classes, have struggled with much heroism and in a disciplined and clearsighted way to liberate their country. After thirty years a People's Democratic Republic of Laos has been established. A revolutionary new future lies ahead for the people of Laos; a future which can now be one of their own making.

REFERENCES

1 See M. Caldwell, 'Thailand : towards the revolution', in *Race & Class* (Vol. XVIII, no. 2, 1976)
2 *South-East Asia: An Introduction* (London 1973
3 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* (8th December 1975)
4 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* (6th December 1975)
5 J.L. Zasloff, *The Pathet Lao Leadership and Organization* (Lexington Massachusetts, 1973), p. 42
6 Ibid., p. 37

Notes and documents

MPLA: against racism, tribalism*

Practically the only whites the Angolan people have known during the past 500 years were racist exploiters in the harshest, most brutal sense of the term.

For over four of those centuries, Portugal's chief form of 'economic extraction' was the raw material of labour — slaves. Mainly they were exported to Portugal's American colony of Brazil, but also to the Spaniards for Cuba and to anyone else in the slave-buying market. Since the end of the last century, the exploitation was that of black labour in Angola itself, often under conditions just one step removed from slavery. Labourers, for instance, were supplied by regional Portuguese authorities to coffee, sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations — contracts being signed between the authorities and the white plantation owners — on terms just sufficient to keep them alive and working. They had no rights whatsoever. To try to run away was a drastically punishable crime.

This semi-slave system ended only with independence and the setting up of the People's Republic of Angola on 11 November 1975. If there were strong anti-white feelings among African Angolans, this would be the most natural thing in the world. But the replacement of anti-black racism by anti-white, anti-mulatto racism was a danger which the MPLA leadership recognized and fought against from the time it was founded.

About three months after the People's Republic was established, there was a warning signal in the form of an anti-white demonstration

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*We are grateful to the MPLA Department for Political Orientation for sending us the original documents and to Wilfred Burchett and the (US) *Guardian* for permission to use his text.

in Luanda with demands ranging from the removal of whites and mulattos from the administration, to their expulsion from the country. Exactly who was behind this was not clear — publicly at least. The reply of the MPLA leadership was to vigorously step up a campaign against racism, tribalism and regionalism.

As a guide document for this campaign, the MPLA's Department for Political Orientation produced an analytical text on the origins of racism. The following are some excerpts from this paper.

With the appearance of class society, the exploiting classes sought all sorts of ideological justifications to explain their domination of society. Throughout time there have been the most diverse theories to justify the inequalities in our society — from those to justify slavery to those justifying the domination of one race by another. At the same time as bourgeois revolutionaries in Europe proclaimed 'liberty' and 'fraternity' as their motto, these ideas were rejected by this same bourgeoisie for the people of the colonial territories acquired by their conquests in Asia, Africa and the Americas ...

'Racism a tool of rulers'

One can thus affirm that racism emerged as a necessity for the exploiter classes and became part of the ideology of colonialism. In the period of imperialism — racism became the principal ideological arm of the imperialist forces. The ruling class enlisted the services of political scientists, psychologists and philosophers to try to justify, in a pseudo-scientific form, the so-called 'inferiority of the black race' and the existence of 'superior' and 'inferior' races.

With the evolution of capitalist society itself and its increasing contradictions, racism assumed diverse forms. German Nazism was the high point of racism in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, and was used as a fundamental instrument of fascist ideology. In southern Africa, racism attained its highest point with the racist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia institutionalizing 'apartheid' as official policy.

The Portuguese colonies were also the scene of frenzied exploitation unleashed by the colonial-fascist Portuguese regime which also used racism to justify the exploitation and pillage of the people of the colonies.

The system of colonial oppression provoked among the colonized peoples various forms of resistance and, at times, the emergence of theories seeking to affirm that the struggle in Africa was between two races and not between classes. Such theories were without perspective. The appearance of the national liberation movements in the 1950s was a decisive step in the struggle for national liberation. These progressive organizations, embracing in their midst individuals

of all races and tribes, succeeded in putting the struggle into correct perspective, defining 'who is the enemy' and 'what is the objective to attain'. Defining the enemy as imperialism and the objective as total independence, it was easy to succeed in mobilizing all the people, irrespective of race, religion or social class, and also to define armed struggle as the sure means of winning total independence.

Racism, as the justification of the domination by the exploiting classes, is a constant necessity of colonial regimes. The Portuguese regime could not be different, so in Portuguese colonial society in Angola racism was also a constant. Thus, at first under a form clear and institutionalized, later under a more subtle and camouflaged form, racism was always a constant of Portuguese colonialism.

By means of decrees, of statutes, by forced labour, the so-called 'inferiority of the black race' was part of official policy. Access to education or professional training was denied to the blacks in order to guarantee domination by the colonial bourgeoisie. Either the blacks had to follow the path of 'assimilation' or they maintained their condition of an inferior race, of irrational beings. This easily gave rise to a situation in which the popular masses, the most exploited and segregated by people of the white race, identified all individuals of that race with the exploiters, with the enemy, and had towards them only feelings of hatred and resentment.

To those who analysed it superficially, colonial society appeared to be divided into two antagonistic classes and races — the white race as the exploiters and the black race as the exploited. The MPLA, from its formation, clearly defined the fact that the liberation struggle was not directed against the white race but against Portuguese colonialism. During the fourteen years of armed struggle against colonialism, a big campaign against racism was carried out — more or less successfully. It was due to this political work that white militants were also able to participate directly in the tasks of the national liberation struggle. Our movement clearly defined that the principal contradiction in colonial Angola was not that which opposed the colonizer (white) and the exploited (black) but between colonialism and the Angolan nation.

Colonialism was a system of imperialist exploitation by the political, social and economic domination of one country (the colony) by the bourgeoisie of the dominating country (imperialist) ...

The principal contradiction

The MPLA always drew attention to the mistake of confusing colonialism, which is a system, with the colonialist settler, who is a person occupying a determined place within the system. The contradiction which existed in Angola between the settler and the colonized is not a principal but a secondary contradiction ...

It is incontestable that colonialists enjoy a privileged status but it is incorrect to see them as a compact bloc. Among the colonizers there are different social classes, from workers to the big bourgeoisie. In the same way the colonized was a complex of different classes, some being exploiters, others the exploited. The conclusion therefore is that the principal contradiction in Angola is not, and never was, between two races.

In the history of humanity the contradiction between races never constituted the motor force of any process. The racial factor was always secondary and could only be made to appear as the principal factor when public opinion was manipulated from behind the scenes.

Triggered by the liberation struggle in the colonies, the 25 April 1974 coup in Portugal precipitated the end of the colonial regime. It was no longer possible for the colonial bourgeoisie to avoid the end of their reign. But in its death agonies the colonial bourgeoisie, organized in such reactionary organizations as the FRA, ESTINA, FUA [racist organizations dominated by the Portuguese settlers], tried to bring about a neo-colonial, Rhodesian-type solution.

The determination and vigilance of our people and especially the correct position taken by our vanguard, the MPLA — together with FRELIMO in Mozambique, the PAIGC in Guiné-Bissau and the MLSTP in Sao Tome e Principe — completely destroyed these hopes for a 'federalist'- or 'apartheid'-type solution. Thus the first attempt to reimpose imperialist domination via the Portuguese colonial bourgeoisie was defeated.

But our country is geographically important and economically rich, so imperialism had to make a second attempt. It was by relying on the pseudo-nationalist forces that this second attempt was made to guarantee their neocolonialist future. Based on confusing our people and separating them from their vanguard, the puppet forces fostered racism, tribalism and regionalism. For the latter, already the known enemies of our people, the principal opponent was not the exploiter but those who opposed the interests of the exploiters regardless of the colour of their skins. They favoured the new exploiters who intended to occupy the places left vacant by the Portuguese colonial bourgeoisie. The criminal activities of the puppets to attain their objectives have clearly proven to our people what they are and who was protecting them ...

It was by the correct definition of the principal enemy and the objectives to be attained that our movement (MPLA) distinguished itself ever more clearly from the reactionary forces. Imperialism, our principal enemy, also came to be our direct enemy. It was the sharpening of the contradictions between our people and imperialism that led us to initiate the 'Second Struggle for National Liberation' ...

The massive participation of the Angolan people in resisting this second round — the battle against imperialism and its puppets — led

to the rapid defeat of the latter. At the present time, the imperialists, virtually defeated on the military and political fronts, have opted for a new form of activity — subversion within our ranks.

Acting in a camouflaged form, waving our own flag, shouting our own slogans, the imperialists try to divide us. Racism, tribalism, divisionist tactics — these are the chosen fields of the enemy. Where vigilance has slackened or we have slipped into the errors of rightist or leftist deviations from our political line, imperialism finds a fertile soil for subversion. Its objective continues to be crystal clear — attack the MPLA and the people as the principal enemy. In this way it will buy itself into our midst and infiltrate its most trusted agents — those best equipped to carry out subversive activities. By trying to define friends and enemies according to the colour of their skin and not by the position which they take in relation to our people, the imperialists will foment agitation and division and, in the final analysis, plots.

The enemies, as our movement clearly defines, are those who oppose the advance of our revolution. They are those who aim at the continued exploitation of our people. Exploiters have neither race nor colour. Just as revolutionaries are not defined by the colour of their skin, but by their ideology and by their activities, so the reactionaries and exploiters can only be defined by their ideas and activities ....

'Every racist an opportunist'

Among ourselves, racism, just like the segregation of elements of another race, generally appears as the result of opportunism. Every racist is an opportunist. Thus today we can see more clearly than ever that manifestations of racism frequently emerge in sectors of the bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie. This social sector, although it forms part of the anti-imperialist front, is, due to material conditions, vacillating in its political positions. Thus we frequently observe racist tendencies within this social sector because of the simple desire to advance their positions or occupy posts that were formerly held by the colonial bourgeoisie.

At the moment when our movement and our people are already defining their strategic aims as those of a people's democracy, racism emerges as a manifestation of political-economic opportunism. Through such manifestations, the agitators in the overwhelming majority of cases have no other aims than those of satisfying their own opportunist interests and serving imperialism. A racist is an enemy of our political line and of our revolution. Those who foment racism divert attention from the principal problems that have to be solved to insure the success of the revolution.

As a political phenomenon, the struggle against racism is essentially carried out at a political level. It is mainly by the scientific

analysis of society and basing ourselves on working-class ideology that we can wage a vigorous struggle against all manifestations of racism. Organization, discipline and vigilance are the fundamental weapons in the fight against racism and divisionist activities. Action Groups within the Workers' Committees and the organs of People's Power and our militants, through ideological discussions and through criticism and self-criticism, should intensity their struggle against all divisionist manoeuvres within our ranks. It is only through strict control over our own acts and strict vigilance regarding the manoeuvres of the enemy, that we will guarantee the success of the revolution and avoid all deviations from our political line.

Book reviews

The Mapoon Books
(Victoria, International Development Action, 1976)

Book 1: *The Mapoon Story by the Mapoon People*
Edited by J.P. ROBERTS, 24 pp. $1 individuals, $1.50 libraries and institutions

Book 2: *The Mapoon Story according to the Invaders*
Edited and written by J. ROBERTS, M. PARSONS and B. RUSSELL, 112pp. $1.80 individuals, $2.80 libraries and institutions

Book 3: *The Cape York Aluminium Companies and the Native Peoples*
Written by J. ROBERTS and D. MCLEAN. 104pp. $1.80 individuals, $2.80 libraries and institutions.

Available from progressive bookshops or direct from IDA., 73 Little George Street, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065, Australia. Add 70c for one volume, $1.30 postage for all three volumes.

There has been a growing awareness on the left in Australia that much of our research and political action has examined situations and struggles that are somehow external to our everyday existence — this despite the fact that most of us realize, at least intellectually, that our positions of relative (and often absolute) affluence are a result of the direct exploitation of the resources of the Third World. One of the activist groups in Australia that has begun to confront this gulf between our political practice and our immediate wealth is the Melbourne-based research collective, International Development Action.

In publishing the three volumes under review, IDA has put Australian radical research on an entirely new footing. The depth of continuing economic exploitation of Australia's own native people, the Aborigines, is not only lucidly revealed, but the empirical and theoretical relationship between this exploitation and similar corporate operations carried out throughout the world is made both explicit and vivid.

The studies focus on the Mapoon, Weipa and Aurukun Aboriginal tribal groupings on the Cape York Peninsula who have been dispossessed of their land by some of the world's largest mining companies (RTZ, Kaiser, Alcan) and their local offshoots (Comalco, CRA, Billiton, Pechiney and Tipperary) through the connivance, often tacit, sometimes active, of the Queensland State government, the Australian government (both Labour and Liberal) and the church missions. They help not only to educate us on how explosive and anti-imperialist an issue the struggle for Land Rights in Australia is, but serve also as both a tool and a model for committed Australian scholarship.

Space forbids me to review all three books in the detail they deserve; so I shall summarize briefly books 1 and 2, and concentrate on book 3, which exemplifies the qualities of the whole series, Briefly, the first book tells in the words of the Mapoon people how they lived before the Europeans came, the massacres that accompanied white settlement, the destructive and manipulative role played by the Christian Mission at Mapoon, how the blacks lost their land to Comalco and other mining companies following the discovery of bauxite and, finally, how they were forcibly evicted from their land by the government, the church and the companies. In 1974 the Mapoon community militantly re-occupied their land near the site of their expulsion twelve years before. Blacks are now fighting not only for land rights but for their very existence as autonomous communities in Australia.

The second book is a detailed and explicit history of the negotiations between church, state government and the mining companies as they connived to destroy the Weipa and Mapoon communities. It is a masterful reconstruction of both the cultural degradation that the church inflicted on a whole people and the economic exploitation that followed the discovery of mineral wealth on their land.

The third volume provides analysis of the giant mining conglomerates (particularly the British, French and South African *Rio Tinto Zinc* Group, and the American *Kaiser* Group and the billionaire Mellon family's *Alcan Aluminium Ltd*), and directly links these companies' world-wide operations to their presence in Australia. By showing their Australian operations and the effect these have had on the Mapoon, Weipa and Aurukun black communities, new signifi-

cance is given to the horrific details of these companies' exploitation of other native communities and the natural resources of other societies, particularly in the Amazon (especially Brazil), in Southern Africa and in Niugini. This, together with the analysis of how the multinationals are enmeshed, through their large industrial refining and productive complexes, into Australian society and economy, shows quite explicitly how necessary it is to bring anti-imperialist struggles 'back home' if Australia is ever to gain autonomy from the world capitalist system.

The studies as a whole are written clearly and simply — especially the third volume where the large mining conglomerates are described in great detail. We are shown who owns them, who profits from them, how they operate and the manner in which corruption, bribes and pay-offs are a regular form of corporate activity wherever their massive wealth and influence cannot get for them (via 'normal channels') the natural resources they desire. In this regard, the detailed lists of Australian politicians and civil servants (and their families) who accepted very lucrative share issues from Comalco show very directly the patterns of influence and wealth in Australian society through which these companies operate. In addition, the lists of churches, institutions and politicians who, through shares and investments, have benefited directly from the rape of the Aboriginal tribal lands, rips away the last shreds of credibility that Australia has developed a more 'humane' or 'democratic' capitalist system than the rest of the West. Among the 'institutions' listed as holding Comalco shares we find bodies as diverse as National Mutual Life, the Church of England, NSW Government Insurance Office, the Trustees of the Jesuit Fathers, MLC Assurance, the Salvation Army, the Flying Doctor Service, Trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund, University of Sydney, University of Melbourne and Monash University.

Finally there is a detailed section on how the bauxite industry — in its various processes of strip mining, refining, smelting, etc — destroys the environment, produces red-mud and fish poisoning and infects the atmosphere with chemical pollution leading to possible brain damage. The absolute cynicism displayed towards the environmental implications of these operations, both worldwide and in Australia, are set out in considerable detail, as are the attempts of these organizations to divert public attention from the ecological wasteland they leave behind. As in the worldwide steel and aluminium can 'recycling' frauds, these companies spend much more in propaganda and public relations than they do in actual conservation. Thus, the whole Comalco 'restoration' programme that was to follow the removal of bauxite is exposed in the study as a public relations fraud to keep the public unaware of the utter degradation of the once beautiful Mapoon, Weipa and Aurukun lands,

until the companies have safely repatriated their profits overseas.

While the story told in these three volumes is both a horrific and shameful one, there emerges from a reading of it a greater understanding of the forces that have helped shape Australia. Such an understanding will be necessary if Australia is to have a different future. In shaping this future, an increasing number of Australians will be inspired by the resistance of the Mapoon, Weipa and Aurukun people. For the detailed knowledge of the background to this resistance, we are greatly indebted to the research staff at International Development Action.

The Flinders University of South Australia RON WITTON

Destiny

By DAVID EDGAR (London, Eyre Methuen, 1976). 54pp. £1.00 Paper.

The script of David Edgar's anti-fascist play has been published to coincide with its production by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford. Certainly, it is to be hoped that the play will gain a much wider audience in the near future.

What distinguishes this play is Edgar's sense of history and his unwillingness to engage in simple, political stereotypes, presenting the fascists as a mere lunatic fringe and thereby enabling us to dismiss them out of hand. Edgar portrays them here as entirely realistic, with a confused but potent ideology firmly grounded in the discontents of post-war British society. At times the play's realism is frightening, but no more so than the threat of fascism today — it can't be dismissed, it must be fought.

The opening scenes trace the specifically British antecedents of modern fascism — the downfall of Empire, the decline of traditional Toryism, the latent militarism of the middle classes and the ravages of capitalism on the lower middle and established working classes. At first, the fascists themselves come over as pathetic figures, gathering in a backstreet pub in 1968 to celebrate Hitler's birthday. Only the news of Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech on that night alerts them — and us — to their potential to mould together the various discontented elements around them. The remainder of the play shows how this potential is realized during a Black Country by-election campaign, which takes place at the same time as an unofficial strike by Asian workers at a local car components factory, until at the end the historic compromise with capital is reached.

The play also highlights the poverty of traditional politics in combatting fascism. The young, 'liberal' Tory wants to 'keep race out of politics', while the left-wing Labour candidate uses advocacy of

the Asian workers' cause to secure his nomination, only to abandon them in the name of the 'rule of law' when violence breaks out on their picket line.

Unfortunately, in all of this the Asian workers tend to come over as essentially victims, with only brief references to their own struggles, their own determination to fight back and, more recently — since the play was written — their self-organization. But this is no more than a quibble, given the enormous debt one owes the dramatist for giving us a graphic rendering of a possible destiny.

University of Birmingham LEE BRIDGES

South Africa: the crisis in Britain and the Apartheid economy

By DORCAS GOOD and MICHAEL WILLIAMS, Foreign investment in South Africa: a discussion series, No.1 (London, Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1976). 23pp. 50p.

Foreign Investment and the Reproduction of Racial Capitalism in South Africa

By MARTIN LEGASSICK and DAVID HEMSON, Foreign investment in South Africa: a discussion series, No.2 (London, Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1976). 16pp. 50p.

These two pamphlets are the first in a new series of papers commissioned by the Anti-Apartheid Movement as a contribution to the debate on the role of foreign investment in South Africa. The views expressed by the authors, the introduction cautiously states, 'do not necessarily reflect those of the Anti-Apartheid Movement'. And for good reason: the papers are, as far as I know, the first marxist interpretation published by this Movement of the relationship between South Africa's economy and that of Britain.

The apartheid economy was sedulously constructed by British imperialism from about 1870 for the export of capital to offset the decline in the rate of return on industrial investment in the metropolis. At the end of 1973 direct foreign investment in South Africa amounted to £3,585m; to which Britain had contributed £2,150m, or 60 per cent. The return on this investment is among the highest in the world — thanks to the apartheid system of a voteless black labour force, without trade union rights; of a contract labour and pass law system, which shunts labour to and fro to work at rock bottom wage rates, and of a racial tyranny, which ensures political stability and creates a favourable climate for continuing investment flow.

The authors explode the popular fallacy that Britain's economic

malaise arises from the unproductivity of the British workers and their consumption of too large a share of the country's wealth. The current crisis stems from the falling rate of profit. The big corporations are unable to reduce the living standards of the workers sufficiently to compensate for this decline. Consequently, firms are transferring their funds to other countries, especially to South Africa. Under the apartheid regime they can secure super profits, because racial oppression can keep wage rates at an all time low. Besides, a permanent, growing reserve army of labour can be locked up in the Bantustans, at no expense to the state, and adroitly manipulated to undercut the wage rates of the established black workers in the industrial areas.

Political and social considerations apart, the Winter Rebellion of 1976 in South Africa sprang from a further fall in the already low living standards of the black workers, whose rate of exploitation has been stepped up; and from massive unemployment, now estimated at 20 per cent — the result of increasing mechanization and the need to delay the fall in the rate of profit.

Vorster mowed down thousands of workers and students, and did so under the encouraging gaze of the western powers. He thereby put on display the power and resolve of his government — for the benefit, in part, of foreign investors on whom the South African economy is so dependent. Certainly, the exhibition of sustained fire-power and overkill gave them the assurance that he could maintain the safety of capital. Such assurance was all the more necessary in that South Africa is the world's fourth largest borrower of Eurocurrencies from UK financial institutions. At present she has £1,173m on loan to help her balance of payments deficit and to achieve economic growth rates to keep the apartheid economy going.

The transfer of British funds to South Africa has occasioned mass unemployment in the UK and greater exploitation of the South African black workers. Good and Williams therefore believe that the British workers share a community of interest with the South African black workers in fighting apartheid.

Not the least important contribution of their pamphlet to the ongoing debate is the data showing that western and South African state capital, Afrikaner and South African English capital, are inextricably linked.

Legassick and Hemson's pamphlet focuses on the importance of foreign investment for racial relationships in South Africa. They disembowel the myth, propagated by big business, that more foreign investment, more economic growth, would lead to the erosion of apartheid, to the raising of living standards. In point of fact, the dramatic acceleration of industrial development from the early 1960s, fuelled by the massive inflow of foreign capital, has brought

no change in the sub-subsistence wage rates of the blacks. Also, implicit in the economic growth argument is the insidious view that there is no need for mass movements and struggles.

The western investors have always had a stake in the reproduction of racial capitalism, of cheap black labour, forced to sell its labour power below its value — for the production of what one writer calls archaic surplus value. The old migrant labour system entailed a form of agricultural income in the *native reserves* to raise the starvation wages of the blacks — though not to a subsistence level. But by the 1940s this extra-industrial income had dried up completely. Thereupon the state, representing the growing interpenetration of local and foreign capital, transformed the *native reserves* into Bantustans, which expresses the change from migrant labour to contract labour.

Given the requirement of capitalism for a settled labour force, the state has had to accept a growing, permanent black proletariat, replete with families, in the 'white' areas. The Bantustans are unable to reverse this process, inasmuch as the South African industrial omelette cannot be unscrambled. They are, rather, 'the form in which the industrial reserve army exists': to be used in times of industrial expansion. The role of the Bantustan governments — a replication of Britain's old policy of indirect rule — is to shoulder the social costs of reproducing labour more cheaply in these separate areas; and to exercise an iron discipline over the contract workers who, for the greater part of the year, sell their only commodity, labour power, in the industrial areas. But the costs of maintaining them at the point of production are reduced, because their families are forced to remain behind in the Bantustans.

The contract workers are fragmented along tribal lines in the various Bantustans and separated from the settled black proletariat in the cities. Even so, the people of the Bantustans 'are a part of the South African proletariat', as the authors rightly observe. The state has recreated tribal forms without breathing into them a corresponding content. Consequently, we cannot speak of the Bantustans as a pre-capitalist economy sustaining a so-called peasantry. The South African economy is a single, unified one. The theory of South African internal colonialism, of neo-colonialism, of a dual economy, cannot stand up to scientific scrutiny.[1]

London KEN JORDAAN

REFERENCE

1 For a critique of South African 'internal colonialism', see Michael Williams, 'An analysis of South African Capitalism: neo-Ricardianism or Marxism?', *Bulletin of the Conference of Socialist Economists* (Vol.IV, no. 1, 1975), pp. 1-38.

Inside India Today

By DILIP HIRO (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976). 332pp. £6.95

The author states in his preface that his aim was to produce a work which would fill the need for a single, comprehensive book to inform the general reader, Indian or non-Indian, as to how India — in his words 'the most complex political entity in the world' — functions at both the popular and institutional levels. To this end he has ordered the findings of his research and field work into separate sections: on 'Life in India' (where, refreshingly, he has described the lives and circumstances of real people and not of those whom the Indian government would choose to show us); on 'the Politics and Economics of Centrism', in which he not only describes the present political-administrative structure, but also reveals the history of opportunism, hypocrisy and double-think that lies behind the present Congress administration; on 'Leftist and Rightist Forces', with a welcome short historical account of the communist movement and a concise appraisal of the economic, political and cultural interests underlying such parties as the Swatantra and Jana Sangh; and, in the final section, 'Resilience of the System', on the various forces which hold together and which present a threat to the existing regime. In conclusion, he has written at some length on the 'Constitutional Coup' of 26 June 1975, and on potential future developments, which he sees as favouring 'left' forces.

Dilip Hiro's book is clear, coherent, informative, excellently-documented and interesting throughout. Its major achievement, I feel, is in explaining the background and lead-up to the important events of June 1975. What he has to say about the Congress government's consistent policy, since 1947, of combining minimal reforms with maximum repression of those who agitate for them, and about the gap which has always existed between socialist rhetoric and concrete reality, should be sufficient to refute once and for all those wishful thinkers who believe that 'Independent' India was ever a democracy, and that all would be well if only we could go back to May 1975 and forget the Emergency.

There will be readers, apart from myself, who would have liked to see the author go a few steps further along the path of exploding the 'saintly' myth of M.K. Gandhi; but at least he is shown here, though briefly, as a conservative and an advocate of class collaboration, but never of class struggle. I would also have liked Hiro to be less cursory in his treatment of the Bangladesh question and the questions of imperialism and of Indo-Soviet collaboration; and feel that he has over-simplified his explanation of the various 'Naxalite' groups. (He does not, for example, consider the late T. Nagi Reddy's group as being of any significance now, whereas it does in fact have a

considerable following in some parts of the country).

My only real quarrel with Dilip Hiro is over his deliberate fudging-over of the present differences between the CPI(M) and the CPI(ML). Whether or not he has been over-generous to the former in his explanation of the United Front government's reaction to Naxalbari, one is now, after the Emergency, faced with an incontrovertible fact. The CPI(M) leadership still harbours hopes of an election. It is not making any real effort to organize an underground movement (unlike some of the right-wing and social-democratic parliamentary parties). The various groups of the CPI(ML) have, however, since the party's inception, eschewed parliamentary politics as a mockery in the Indian context (and have not the events of June 1975 proved them right?). The author rather lamely concludes that, at the present stage, there is room for both parties to exist non-antagonistically.

Perhaps, considering the fluidity of the situation, Dilip Hiro deems it wise to be non-committal, except in a general sense. But, in the long run, all of us have to decide whether we are for reforms in the existing system or the establishment of a new, just system. Maybe he is still trying to make up his mind. Meanwhile, thanks to him for a worthwhile book, which has, indeed, filled an important gap in the readable literature on India.

London MARY TYLER

Migrants and refugees: Muslim and Christian families in Bristol

By PATRICIA JEFFERY, (London, Cambridge University Press, 1970). 221pp. £4.95

After the study of race relations in Britain was made respectable by the 'old' Institute of Race Relations, various research units were set up across the country. This book is the product of the Bristol unit — a revised version of a PhD thesis — and has been hailed by its director as the best book on race relations in Britain to have appeared in 20 years. In this work Ms Jeffery sets out to study Pakistani families in Bristol — concentrating on four main case studies — two Christian, two Muslim.

The first chapter attempts to discuss the general background of the families, ranging from the history of Islam in the sub-continent and the emergence of Pakistan, to food and clothes, economic and social background. The next two chapters are descriptive accounts of the families in Pakistan and Bristol. But having amassed all these facts, the author does not seem happy to interpret them: the task of analysing her own evidence in her own way is too much for her. In chapter 4 she turns for a framework to everybody else's sociological

and anthropological models — Gordon, Patterson, Allen, Krauz, Mayer and Barth — and then tries desperately to fit her facts into the conceptual moulds she has borrowed. Inevitably the arranged marriage between the empirical and the 'theoretical' does not have an authentic ring, and combines with her suspect 'methodology' to lead her to questionable and even dangerous conclusions.

In the main Ms Jeffery is aware of methodological constraints and bias in her work and admits it all: she herself is white, her households are unrepresentative, all coming from urban backgrounds, Christians are over-represented and so on. But far more serious questions have to be raised. Why does she exclude a deep analysis of the Pakistani youth or fail to analyse their relationships with their elders and with white society? Does not the fact that Pakistanis were made Christian by colonial Britain also mean that they would have been anglicized, educated and 'modernized' away from their feudal relationships and made ready for a place in industrialized Britain? Besides, Christians form only 1.7 per cent of all Pakistanis, yet half her in-depth studies are Christian; did she skew her sample so as to arrive at the following conclusion?

> The Muslims do not see themselves as 'immigrants' to Britain: they do not intend to stay here permanently. They do not put down roots in Britain, they retain their links with Pakistan ... The Christians see themselves as refugees: they are escaping from a situation in which they sense hostility against them ... their future can only be outside Pakistan, and they try to put down roots in their new home ... emigration is the only way to rectify this and it can only be a permanent exile.

Muslims are migrants and Christians are refugees (hence the title of the book). This is an extremely dangerous conclusion. My uncle talked about going home for the last fifty years and now he is buried in Yorkshire. Black Americans have talked about going back to Africa for centuries. This sort of thesis, whether intentional or not, only lends fuel to the repatriation lobby.

Essentially this is an anthropological study of 'the way in which certain elements of the migrants' culture can be protected and how children may be brought up in a Pakistani domestic setting in Britain'. The value of Ms Jeffery's work is that she looks from the inside of family life outwards and that she correctly asserts: 'It is not possible to understand the behaviour and aspirations of my informants in Bristol, without a close consideration of their life styles and life chances in Pakistan.' Her considerable weakness lies in the fact that to her, culture appears to be something unrelated to social relations and economic forces. It is something without dynamic, something that is acted upon but cannot react against; culture for her is like some metaphysical cloud settled over Pakistani rooftops. Thus we get

no treatment of families in production (she excuses it in an aside), whereas this must influence family relations, life styles, consumption patterns and so on. She also does not seem to treat seriously at all the fact of racialism in British society — that the jobs held out, the housing available, the type of education and the individual prejudice of neighbours will have profoundly affected relationships even within the family and served to reinforce and/or change certain attitudes and customs. The weakening or strengthening of a culture cannot be judged, as Ms Jeffery tries to do, in isolation from social factors. In the light of the events of May and June 1976 and the massive demonstration of solidarity coming from within the Asian community based precisely on the positive aspects of their culture, she may be forced to rethink her barren and essentially reactionary framework.

'Culture', Cabral once said,' is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history ...'

Middlesex Polytechnic MOHAMMED ASGHAR

Irian Jaya: the transformation of a Melanesian economy

By ROSS GARNAUT and CHRIS MANNING (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1974), 116pp.

In 1963 sovereignty over the former Dutch colony of West New Guinea, now West Irian or Irian Jaya, was handed over to the Republic of Indonesia. Little has been heard since in the world press about this eastern-most region of Indonesia — only twice has it been in the headlines. The first time was in the days of the so-called Act of Free Choice (August 1969), when the Papuas of West Irian were forced at gunpoint to opt for the harsh military government in Jakarta. The second was when, some years later, American cultural anthropologist Wynn Sargent married a Papua headman, only to be expelled by the military authorities on the charge of 'subversive activities', as her remarkable marital choice was interpreted in Jakarta.

There is an ominous significance in the lack of news about developments in West Irian. Under cover of this deliberate silence the Indonesian generals in Jakarta are busily engaged in selling out West Irian's rich natural resources to a number of western and Japanese capitalist corporations, keeping their activities out of the public eye as much as possible.

Hence, Garnaut and Manning have done very useful work by publishing various economic data which otherwise would have remained concealed from the critics of the military government in Jakarta. These data clearly show how West Irian is now serving as a

supplier of raw materials, as a market for consumer goods produced in industrialized countries and as a provider of cheap labour. Nowhere in West Irian are industries being set up to process raw materials locally. Exploration for oil, which the Nederlandsche Nieuw Guinea Petroleum Maatschappij had ceased several years before the transfer of sovereignty, has been resumed by a consortium led by Petromer Trend and has led to several rich finds. Also 'several promising non-ferrous projects have been discovered allowing two large projects to begin. In its 1968 annual report the Freeport Sulphur Company announced ... the existence near Mt. Ertsberg of a large ore body containing high concentrations of copper and small quantities of gold and silver. In late 1972 PT Pacific Nickel announced a decision to go ahead with a major project on Gag Island, offshore from Sorong.' The mining contract between Freeport and the Indonesian government gives Freeport special status as a pioneer investor with a three-year corporation tax holiday. 'It will pay corporation tax at 35.5 per cent after three years and 41.75 per cent after a further seven years, which is close to normal rates for copper mining. The company will pay no land rent or royalty and has no specific obligations for local or provincial development.'

The data presented also demonstrates the kind of 'economic development' being sponsored by the IMF and the World Bank, not just in West Irian but in nearly every 'developing country' in Asia and Africa. Foreign investment is primarily intended to serve the interests of the foreign investor, while the *comprador* government of the country in which the investment is made is bought off with tax benefits and other royalties.

But despite their own evidence, Garnaut and Manning fail to take a critical stand towards such IMF and World Bank style 'economic development'. They are, instead, adherents of the kind of 'developmentalism' preached by some development economists at the Australian National University at Canberra, in particular Professor Heinz Arndt. Following the guidelines of modern *laissez-faire* economics, they see the overriding objective of 'underdeveloped' countries to be the attainment of optimum 'economic growth'. Close cooperation with 'developmentally-minded' *comprador* governments and economic experts supplied by the West, either directly or through the training of indigenous technocrats and other stooges of western interests, is what is most conducive to the attainment of this goal. With 'suitable adjustments to specific national conditions', the motor of development is supplied by 'rationally-conceived central programs' based upon the application of sound monetary and budgetary controls, the freest possible operation of market forces, the attraction of maximum foreign aid and investment in the 'take-off' stage, encouragement of such indigenous enterprise as is able to function in a competitive international environment, and the

stimulation of agricultural production through technological and infra-structural improvements. And the 'social' justification for this approach is that absolute economic growth will, in the long run, lead to an absolute increase in living standards as measured by average real income per head — and is the only approach which is likely to do so! Arndt and his school have no doubt that an absolute rise in living standards in this sense is the highest practicable good that can be conferred upon the population of any 'underdeveloped' country — and this given the necessary commitment by the governments concerned and the availability of western capital and know-how.

The problem, however, is not to accelerate the acquisition of capital or the growth of gross national product, but to arrive at a just distribution of wealth — which requires nothing less than drastic reforms in the existing social and political structure of the country as envisaged by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

Transnational Institute, Amsterdam ERNST UTRECHT

The Bride Price

By Buchi Emecheta (London, Alison and Busby, 1976). 168pp. £3.50

When Aku-nna's father dies and she has to return from the city to live in her mother's village, all that gives her value is her prospective bride price. Her mother and uncle indulge her whim for education so as to raise the price and look around for the highest bidder. But Aku-nna falls in love, and her lover, being of slave extraction, is an outcast in the village. They run away and marry. After a brief spell of happiness Aku-nna dies in childbirth.

Buchi Emecheta is a wonderfully evocative story-teller. She captivates her readers, draws us into her story, her land, her village, by entering us into Aku-nna's world and her struggle to come to terms with it, first as a young girl of 13 thrust into an adult role, and then as the lonely city girl coming to realization of village life and womanhood. And from the sensitivity and wholeness of the telling emerges a lesson on African womanhood far richer than any sociological or anthropological treatise could ever be. There is a lesson, too, for those imperious western feminists now intent on liberating their 'backward' African sisters from clitorodectomy and infibulation without a thought for the culture, social structure, family relations, divisions of labour and primitive economy in which such customs are based.

But that is not to say that Buchi Emecheta herself makes the connections for us. Her position, her own values, are far from political or even radically 'black'. In this book, as in her previous

documentary novel, *Second Class Citizen*, there lies a vague sense of contempt for her countrymen's values and an implied respect for bourgeois western standards. Her heroine, Aku-nna is (western) educated and thereby 'modernized' into wishing a love match. Aku-nna rejects the aspersions on her husband's caste because he is educated, speaks English, passes exams and buys her a 'lovely Vono bed, with a real sprung mattress'. In such superficialities he is superior to her kinsmen. Finally, Aku-nna's death, though presented as a fact of life on one level, is, on another, a final judgement on her 'ignorant' Ibo family who tried to marry her off against her will and then forced her to live as an outcast.

As in her other books, Buchi Emecheta combines an intuitive understanding of her people and their customs — and it is this which gives force and beauty to her work — with a superficial judgment of them in western 'middle class' terms. It is almost as though she came to them in their culture but parted with them in her class.

Institute of Race Relations JENNY BOURNE

Race and Ethnic Relations: sociological readings

Edited by GORDON BOWKER and JOHN CARRIER. Introductory essay by PERCY COHEN (London, Hutchinson, 1976). 382pp. £7.50 Cloth. £3.95 Paper

The book consists of thirty-five extracts, selected mainly from standard, not to say classic, texts in sociological literature. Clearly no one with a serious interest in the field will be satisfied with these titbits: indeed, excluding a six-page select, but none the less fairly unexceptional, bibilography, and excluding the index and nineteen pages of editorial commentary, the book is made up of extracts averaging less than ten pages each in length. Who would willingly forego the full text of Liebow's *Tally's Corner*, Drake and Cayton's *Black Metropolis*, or the towering achievement of O.C. Cox's *Caste, Class and Race* in return for the meagre snippets of them offered here? That is not the only reservation about the book's content, for no less than eight extracts are reprinted from accessible journal articles, including W. Lloyd Warner's seminal piece, 'American Caste and Class', Schutz's 'The Stranger' and Genovese's important 'Materialism and idealism in the history of Negro slavery in the Americas'. The book, like a dozen others which have made, or are poised to make their appearance on the British book market, is a product of the rapid expansion in new courses established in institutions of higher education dealing with race relations, minority group relations, ethnic studies or the like. In short, it is a book called into print by the

existence of a sizeable and, the publishers must believe, a potentially expanding undergraduate market.

The one original contribution in this book is Percy Cohen's essay 'Race Relations as a Sociological Issue'. After a sketch of dominant models and their variants currently in use in the sociological literature, Cohen concludes that there is something to be said for them all. Nevertheless, he says, we need a reformulation of existing theory which will encompass all the evidence and explain it. The reformulation turns out to be little more than a truncated version of the theoretical standpoint used by Furnivall in his studies of colonial societies, namely the cultural pluralist model. But can one usefully apply this to industrialized societies, controlled via a powerful, centrally-organized state?

But Furnivall is not the only (unacknowledged) source to which Cohen turns. Simmel, and others who have emphasized the role of group affiliation in structuring conflict, are the real progenitors of Cohen's newly-formulated theoretical perspective. The weakness in all this is that it becomes impossible to assign weight to one sector in society or one group as opposed to another. Who ultimately calls the tune and under what circumstances?

City Polytechnic, Sheffield STUART BENTLEY

The Division of Labour

Edited by ANDRE GORZ (Brighton, The Harvester Press, June 1976). 189pp., £6.95 Cloth

In recent years there has been renewed interest in the structure and organization of work under monopoly capitalism. Some of the reasons for this revival have been: (1) New experiments in work organization in socialist countries, especially in China. (2) The events of May 1968 which focused attention again on class struggle in the advanced industrial societies. (3) Developments in capitalist techniques to increase profits in the form of 'job-enrichment' schemes, regrouping of work operations (see, for example, the experiments in Volvo, IBM and Polaroid). It is not important here to determine which of these factors is the most significant; what is important is the re-interpretation within marxist literature of previous debates which had, in some ways, been considered resolved. Two of these debates are dealt with in this book. First, what is the role of science and technology within capitalist production, and secondly, is the organization and hierarchy within capitalist production primarily a result of technical efficiency, or is its primary function control of the labour force? While the essays in this

collection, nearly all of them reprints from *Temps Modernes*, deal generally with the labour process and class struggle in modern capitalism, the two which deal specifically with these questions are Gorz's 'Technology, technicians and class struggle' and Marglin's 'What do bosses do?'.

The gist of Marglin's argument is that the capitalist division of labour — the development of which he traces historically — was created for the specific purpose of controlling the work force and maximizing profit: 'the origin and success of the factory lay, not in technological superiority, but in the substitution of the capitalist's for the worker's control of the work process and the quantity of output.' As a corrective to the more prevalent argument that the division of labour within the factory is largely the result of technological efficiency, Marglin's thesis carries validity. But the major drawback of his essay is that in describing the development of organization and hierarchy in capitalist production, he collapses several historical epochs. Unlike Marx's account in Volume 1 of *Capital*, Marglin's fails to make clear whether he is discussing handicraft, manufacture or machino-facture production. Hence the reader is frequently confused as to which period of capitalist development Marglin is referring to.

Gorz takes up the same topic. He points out that, until recently, 'most Marxists still thought of the forces of production, in particular science and technology, as ideologically neutral' — that they had a dynamic and logic of their own which under a capitalist system develops in growing contradiction to the 'capitalist social relations of production'. But once the latter relations had been destroyed by socialism, the forces of production would be released. Hence the European Communist parties see 'all available productive capacity and all available manual, technical, professional and intellectual skills' (which capitalism uses 'in a destructive or parastic manner') as valuable and useful in the transition to socialism. A discussion of this question bears not only on the transition of capitalism to socialism, but also on the highly controversial topic of the class position of the white-collar worker today.

The debate concerning the 'new working class' began in 1962 with the publication of Mallet's 'La nouvelle classe ouvrière'. Gorz argues that in analysing the position of this group, consisting of scientific and technical workers, a distinction must be made between their objective and subjective position within production. Their objective position is that they belong to the category of productive exploited and alienated workers, whereas their subjective position vis-à-vis other workers is different:

> In other words whereas scientific and technical workers have the same relation to capital as the working class they do not stand in

> the same relation to one another. As long as technical-scientific work and manual work are performed in parallel but separately, it must remain true that technical and scientific workers produce the means by which other workers are exploited and oppressed and will necessarily be perceived by them as being agents of capital.

Gorz also highlights a crucial ambiguity within the position of scientific and technical workers. He argues that their present day rebellion against their lack of control within production is not so much a rebellion as proletarians, as Mallet would have us believe, but rather a rebellion 'against being treated as proletarians'. He therefore concludes that:

> It is not adequate, in characterizing the position of scientific and technical workers in the production process, to examine it solely from the point of view of the relationship between capital and labour. It is just as important to consider it from the point of view of their relationship to other workers.

Though Gorz's analysis points out the weaknesses of Mallet's position, his account still remains unsatisfactory. Gorz, in attacking Mallet's insistence on the inevitability of technical workers forming the new working-class vanguard, seems to envisage little or no possibility of an alliance between this sector of workers and the rest. This approach is as one-sided as Mallet's. Whereas the latter emphasizes the objective position of the new working class, Gorz emphasizes the subjective position.

But viewed as aspects of the ongoing debate, both Gorz's and Marglin's contributions are invaluable.

London GEOFF HUNT

Sexism in Children's Books: facts, figures and guidelines

Edited by the CHILDREN'S RIGHTS WORKSHOP (London, Writers and Readers Publishing Coop, 1976). 56pp. 60p

Several definitions of sexism, 'a word which itself grew out of an analogy with racism', are presented in this collection: 'women's exploitation and oppression', 'prejudice against the female sex', 'arbitrary stereotyping of males and females on the basis of their gender'. But the uniform message is loud and clear: as portrayed in young children's stories and picture books, girls and women are a pretty boring lot.

It is not only a matter of 'Daddy-in-his-motor-car-and-Mummy-at-

the-sink', though this is much in evidence. It also involves the whole relationship of boys and girls to life. Whereas boys act on the world, girls are acted upon, or merely observe. The main characters in all the books examined, whether children or animals, are overwhelmingly male. Girls, if they appear at all, lurk in the background, passive, admiring, supportive. Boys explore, have adventures. Girls do so only to be 'rescued', and more often stay in the safety of their (white middle-class) homes. The worst examples are the books dealing directly with male and female roles ('What Girls Can Be', 'What Boys Can Be', etc.). The texts read like a send-up of sex-role stereotyping, reinforced by equally ghastly illustrations. If you suspect that the researchers are being over-sensitive, look at the rhymes and pictures reproduced here.

Even for those of us not directly concerned with children's books, important questions come to mind which unfortunately cannot be explored in this short collection. What is the real significance of these findings; how far do they both *reflect* and *form* social reality? The authors rightly stress that the books misrepresent the experience of most children, such as those with working mothers (seldom mentioned). But there is a potential problem here in that some stereotypes, for clear historical, social and economic reasons, *do* have a basis in reality. Is it 'sexist' to represent this, or should books convey the ideal? The writers argue that these reading materials are central in providing models of sex-roles for the young child. What kind of counterweight could the very best of books provide to the observed realities of a male-dominated society? As their definitions of sexism indicate, the writers have no shared analysis of the concept. We have to remember that women's subordination is not solely dependent on sexist attitudes, any more than racism is on prejudice. Both are related to other institutions in society. But the ideology of sexism still has to be tackled in its own right, and that is why this book is important reading.

London HERMIONE HARRIS

How the Other Half Dies: the real reasons for world hunger

By SUSAN GEORGE (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1976). 349pp. £1.00

'Before people can do anything they have got to eat', said Hubert Humphrey. 'And if you are looking for a way to get people to lean on you and to be dependent on you, in terms of their cooperation with you, it seems to me that food dependence would be terrific.' Earl Butz, one-time Secretary for Agriculture, put it even more pithily: 'Food', he said, 'is power.'

Susan George, in this meticulously researched and passionate book, shows exactly where that power lies, how it operates and who gets fat on the food that others die in need of. She tells more: she tells us what we can do about it.

But first she demolishes the myths and lies that have dominated western thinking on the 'world food crisis' — the humbug about natural forces and population pressures, etc. Famines and hunger, she shows conclusively, are caused by the distribution of power and resources in the world between the rich countries and the poor countries, and within the poor countries between the élites who own most of the arable land and the mass of the population who own or control little or none: 2.5 per cent of landowners with holdings of more than 250 acres control nearly three-quarters of all the land in the world, with the top 0.23 per cent controlling over half. In Latin America over a third of the rural population must make do with just 1 per cent of the cropland, while in Africa three-quarters of the people have access to scarcely 4 per cent of the land. The local élites also control credit, water and other inputs into agriculture and appropriate most of the produce of the poor farmers. Instead of growing food to feed the local population as the first priority, the large landowners, in collaboration with agribusiness, are growing cash crops for sale in the developed countries. Conversely, the food grain that is needed for the local population is imported from the developed nations, particularly the US. And this, in bad harvest years, would, as the secret CIA report in 1974 pointed out, allow Washington 'to acquire virtual life and death power over the fate of the multitudes of the needy'.

In effect, third world countries get locked into a system which enriches the capitalist centre at the expense of the periphery in the same ways that direct colonial rule did at an earlier stage. 'Without exception, nations that have opted for continuing and intensifying colonial-type one- or two-crop economies inherited from a world they never made, have lived to rue the day the choice was taken.' That choice has been influenced, even dictated, by agencies such as the FAO, the World Bank, and the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, and by such apparently beneficial developments as the spread of technology, the introduction of high-yield varieties of wheat and rice (the 'green revolution'), and the provision of food and other forms of foreign aid by the rich countries. But, as Ms George argues:

> A nation loses its freedom of decision when it gears its production to exports whose prices it does not control either. A farmer loses his freedom of decision when he becomes part of a satellite or contract system that controls both inputs and marketing. But this is exactly the global design that powerful international bodies like FAO and the World Bank are pushing.

In a word, dependence is death. Only those countries which have broken out of the international capitalist system and have so organized their societies, their agriculture and their technology as to be self-sufficient in food, have put an end to such 'natural' phenomena as malnutrition and periodic famines.

But precisely because such an approach is the only way towards development and real independence, it brings those nations into conflict with the upholders of the international capitalist system and its rules. Hence, in the final analysis, the food problem is a political problem; it calls for political action and organization, and it is to Ms George's credit that she points the way to such action for those of us who live in the fat belly of the whale.

University of Manchester LOUIS KUSHNICK

Red, White and Black

By SIDNEY BIDWELL (London, Gordon and Cremonesi, 1976). 213pp. £5.90

The 'Red' of the title is Mr Bidwell himself who states that 'no other M.P.' has written on race 'in such depth'. In his preface Michael Foot, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, heralds the author as 'passionate', 'expert', someone who has represented his Southall constituents with 'unfailing persistence, knowledge and sympathy'.

But on the showing of this book, Mr Bidwell's passion appears misdirected, his expertise pitiful, his knowledge superficial, and his sympathy paternal. Over race his passion amounts to no more than the most conservative, exhortatory, fence-sitting philosophy. Blacks and whites should live in harmony and 'the British will be all right if they are correctly informed. We shall do our best to see that they are.' Faults lie on both sides, whites are wary, and he compares the situation of black immigrants to Britain with that of white emigrants to New Zealand — they also encounter suspicion. The coloureds have the perennial 'chip-on-the-shoulder'.

He agrees that blacks are exploited, but says that they must not see themselves as different from the rest of the working class who are also exploited. Blacks certainly cannot organize autonomously.

> They are not the new British working class but *of* the British working-class. This is an important distinction to make, because if blacks feel that they are the only deprived and hard pressed section of British society they will not so easily be able to win the acceptance that they so desperately need from the white working class ...

According to Bidwell, trade unions provide the means of struggle for black workers as for all workers, and the unions are not racist but just 'slow to change'. Not a word is written about the many Asian strikes where white workers and unions opposed the Asian workforce. Far be it from Bidwell to envisage that blacks might actually have something to teach the labour movement.

It is true that he writes with some passion and at some length about both fascism and imperialism, but he fails to connect them with the current situation. What obtrudes is not his 'passion' but his obsessions — against the Common Market, against Amin, against the Labour moderates, and for the trade union movement, 'Liberation', and his own activities (especially his stand against the 1971 Immigration Act).

Nor, with all his alleged knowledge and expertise, is Mr Bidwell able to distinguish between Gus John, black social worker and ex-Jesuit, Bobby Seale, one time chairman of the US Black Panther Party, and Robert Moore, (white) professor of sociology at Aberdeen. All are classed as black power fanatics and so dismissed. John 'exhibits too much of his racial bias and pride'. Seale and Moore 'smack more of rantings of despair than of constructive attempts to achieve justice for the blacks'. He goes further: he designates Idi Amin and Michael X as protagonists of the black power movement, and on the showing of their record denigrates black power itself — and warns that 'if taken seriously' black power 'would lead to disaster in which black people would suffer most'.

Throughout, unsubstantiated assertions substitute for argument; ideas, sentences are jumbled, and anecdotes are given equal weight with serious research. And from opinion and gossip he derives such generalizations as, 'We do know that West Indians in Trinidad have been frightened by student "black power" demonstrations', and 'A lot of coloured people came originally as students, then married and settled. In the the future there are going to be more coloured men and women in high places.'

His sympathy for blacks (or coloureds as Bidwell prefers to call them) extends only to patronage and stereotype. Young blacks should be more careful in evaluating the opportunities available 'under the democratic system' (and of course the unions will assist them). West Indians are, at one and the same time, anxious 'to see their children progress and achieve social and economic levels higher than those of their parents', yet indifferent to their children's welfare, which in part explains the high proportion of West Indian children in schools for the subnormal!

And the ultimate conclusion of the great 'race relationist' of the Labour left?

> Already more black and brown people are coming forward to make use of Britain's democratic system. A coloured man in public life is

> still something of an exception, but he does a lot for race relations when he is seen in this public-spirited light ... There must eventually be some coloured leaders of British trades unions. When that starts to happen we really will be brothers.

Institute of Race Relations JENNY BOURNE

The Left in Britain 1956-1968

By DAVID WIDGERY (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1976). 549pp. £4.00 Paper.

An element of make-believe runs through this racy scrapbook of the British revolutionary left. It is hard to accept that revolutionary ideas are not more prevalent or attractive at the end of two decades in which Britain has been transformed from a major imperialist nation into a paralysed economy. Yet they are not. It would be a bold person who would argue that the prospects for revolutionary action, for mobilization, are in any way better in the winter of 1976 than they were in the winter of 1956. But it is unquestionable that the crisis of British capitalism has irrevocably deepened in these twenty years.

Widgery's book is not an attempt to analyse this contradiction. For that reason it is easy to be critical of it. This temptation is enhanced by the implicit thesis in the book that the cathartic year of 1968 brought the International Socialists to the fore as the force which could cut through the self-doubt and depression which had lain upon the left since 1956.

This is wishful thinking. It will doubtless provoke some socialists to the kind of sectarian attacks which are well-documented in the book. Yet it is hard to be truly hostile to such an interesting book. The memories which it vividly recreates — some celebratory, mostly tragic — are too much a part of our continuing problems.

The book consists of eight substantial sections. To each, Widgery has contributed a stylish and superficial introductory essay. In a sense he mirrors the problems of the left in his essays. Whereas in dealing with 1956, or with the disarmament movements — the problems at the beginning of the survey — he is able to write coherent if tendentious prose, by the time he comes to the concluding episode, 1968, he is reduced to collage. He appreciates the problem:

> 1968 was a particularly politically unruly year to write about. It defies all attempts to be tidied away. I have instead tried to give a sense of its messiness by using memories, reminiscences, diaries, bits from capitalist and socialist papers, accounts of events and leaflets.

It is all very evocative and immensely readable (I found myself reading the 450 pages of the main text at a sitting). But it does not really succeed, or indeed attempt, to come to grips with the central political issues which require practical solution if we are to learn from the weaknesses of the past: *how* are the economistic, parliamentary and bureaucratic assumptions and structures of the mainstream British labour movement to be transformed in the direction of revolutionary socialism? Widgery only hints at these issues. Because of this approach, the book is open to ignorant, conservative and philistine criticism from precisely those people — traditional Labour Party supporters and trade unionists — whose involvement in debate on the central issues is utterly indispensable.

The meat of the book, then, lies in the substantial selection of contemporary documents appended to each chapter. These are indeed fascinating. They range from the attempts of ex-Communist Party members in the late 1950s to define their politics within the mainstream of the British revolutionary left:

> ... we sought to re-habilitate the rational, humane and libertarian strand within the Communist tradition, with which men of great courage and honour ... have been identified,

to the situationists of Essex University in 1968 described by David Mercer:

> One lad came up to me — I was with John Arden — and they threw this smoke bomb in the auditorium, and this kid said, 'That is a more meaningful event than anything either Arden or you could say.' So Arden diffidently said, 'What does it mean then?' and he replied, 'It means what it means, man.' Arden and I rather shiftily ambled out.

There is no rounded picture to be gained from this book. There is hardly any space given to the Communist Party, let alone the Labour Party, to speak for themselves. Perhaps that is indicative of such a work at this time. But one is left feeling a little guilty, as members of the British left so often do, at having had a jolly good and often moving time without having achieved anything.

London MARTIN KETTLE

Introduction to Black Sociology

By ROBERT STAPLES (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1976). xi + 338pp. Paper.

Robert Staples sets out, in the form of an introductory text, to overturn the vast literature on American race relations and to construct a distinct sociology of the black community and black life in the United States. To a certain extent he has been successful. Drawing on elements of three conceptual models — the colonial, the marxist and the Pan-Africanist — the book weaves its way through the standard textbook topics — culture and personality, community institutions, the family, religion, social class, crime and delinquency, political leadership and movements — in each case demolishing the racist assumptions of traditional sociology and presenting evidence, drawn from more recent studies, of a unique Afro-American culture and social system, albeit one influenced by conditions of oppression and exploitation. In neat counter-distinction to the standard texts, Staples includes at the end of the book a chapter on majority group behaviour and mechanisms for maintaining the racial status quo, followed by an assessment — and one which accurately reflects the present confusion of the American black movement — of future strategies for change.

Ironically, the major weakness of the book lies in its failure to break out of the narrow conceptual framework of American sociology: For example, the chapter on black social class is almost entirely taken up with presenting empirical data on the various attributes of class (e.g., income, occupation, status, life-styles), and only in the last two paragraphs does it touch on wider structural issues:

> A ... probable development is the emergence of a class of Black petty bourgeoisie who will undertake the exploitation of the Black masses that is now done directly by the White colonial power structure. Hence, we shall witness larger numbers of Blacks being elected to public office, programs created to develop a Black capitalist class, and Black functionaries replacing Whites in the role of colonial mediating positions such as teachers, social workers, policemen, etc.
>
> One of the solutions left for us to address is the possible unity of working class Whites and Blacks. At this point in time it is difficult to foresee this event taking place. It would require the White worker to give up his racial privileges for a united class struggle and there is no indication that he is willing to make that sacrifice. Because Blacks are increasingly becoming the lumpen-proletariat, Whites are rapidly being assimilated into the middle class ... Given these factors and alternatives, we will continue to

live in a class- and race-divided society until the contradictions of monopoly capitalism make themselves felt.

Nowhere does Staples himself attempt to analyse what these 'contradiction of monopoly capitalism' my be, or to suggest how they might be exploited by the black community. Without such analysis, and despite Staples radical posturing, we are left with little more than a black version of traditional sociology, and however necessary this might be to counter the racism of white sociology, it is unlikely to serve, as Staples claims, as 'an instrument of liberation' or 'the intellectual vanguard for a humanist society'.

University of Birmingham LEE BRIDGES

Outcasts from Evolution: scientific attitudes to racial inferiority 1895-1900

By JOHN S. HALLER Jnr (New York, McGraw Hill, 1975). 228pp. $3.95 Paper.

The theme of this book is that we cannot understand the strength or true nature of racist beliefs in the contemporary United States unless we appreciate the enormous formative influence of scientific thinking on political thought and action in the second half of the nineteenth century. From the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* to the rediscovery of Mendel's law of inheritance in 1900, the sciences were not only developing rapidly in the US, but were influencing popular culture and the views of mankind held by non-scientific intellectuals, through the works of Herbert Spencer, John Fiske, John Wesley Powell and many more. Two widely-held theories were of particularly important political effect: first, that race progress through rapid evolutionary improvement by means of the inheritance of acquired characteristics was possible and was a peculiarity of the Caucasian race; secondly, that non-Aryan peoples were evolutionary dead ends, mere survivors from the past, incapable of further evolution, and indeed deteriorating and destined, as one of Nature's failures, slowly to die out.

The author demonstrates that the experimental and theoretical work of doctors, psychologists, ethnologists and anthropologists in this period *began from* the assumption of racial inferiority. Their work provided a formidable structure apparently demonstrating and justifying the assumption. Moreover, these men of science were known for their ideas on many matters other than race, so that their racial views were embedded in a mass of pioneering scientific work generally regarded as progressive and intellectually advanced. Educated men, whether liberal or conservative, might throw off

personal prejudices; they could not throw off the weight of science. Thus, even philanthropists who favoured the emancipation of slaves, like Harward zoologist Louis Agassiz, did not favour the notion that all men were equal: Agassiz urged that pure Negroes should be left in the South, which was suited to their physical and mental capacities, and not be moved north, where the climate was unsuited to their character; mulattos were, he thought, artificial hybrids, and therefore doomed to die out.

The book contains many fascinating instances of how assumptions that now seem to us utterly insane could proliferate into myriads of even more insane and bizarre conclusions through the application of rigorous scientific methods of inquiry: the drawing demonstrating the evolution of 'facial angle' from fishes, through birds and dogs to 'Negroes', and then to Caucasian man; the comparison of brain weights; the argument of Dr John H. Van Evrie that Confucius and other distinguished Chinese sages of the past had really been Caucasian, and Shaler's belief that each land mass produced fixity of race characteristics' in its inhabitants, despite which fixity, the north American continent had turned out to be well suited to 'the whole Teutonic branch of the Aryan race'.

But at times in reading this book it is difficult to persevere: the quotations of repellent statements come too thick and fast. One can only admire the author for having, evidently, read through an enormous number of racist nineteenth-century works without giving up. His attempt to condense the huge quantity of material he has read sometimes results in passages that are heavy and obscure, but the book as a whole is well worth reading, and, as its author hoped, illuminating on several contemporary questions, particularly education.

Not least, the book sets us thinking about the assumptions and methodology of the natural sciences, as well as about the transmission of racism.

Oxford — ANN DUMMETT

Books received

This listing does not preclude subsequent publication of reviews.

Aboriginal and Spanish Colonial Trinidad: a study in culture contact. By Linda A. Newson. London, Academic Press, 1976. Cloth £9.80

The Amnesty International Report 1975-1976. London Amnesty International Publications, 1976. Paper £1.50

The Arabs in Israel. By Sabri Jiryis. London, Monthly Review Press, 1976. Cloth £6.75

Big Red Diary 1977. By Christine Jackson. London, Pluto Press, 1976. Paper £1.00

The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925. By Herbert G. Gutman. New York, Pantheon Books, 1976. Cloth $15.95

The Black Man of Shadwell: 4 Stories. By Chris Searle. London, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976. Cloth £2.25

Black People in Britain: the way forward: a conference by and for black people in this society — 17/19 January 1975. Report by Dr Rajeev Dhavan. London, Post-Conference Constituent Committee, 1976. Paper £1.00

By Kenya Possessed: the correspondence of Norman Leys and J. Oldham, 1918-1926. London, University of Chicago Press, 1976. Cloth £14.25

Class in a Capitalist Society: a study of contemporary Britain. By John Westergaard and Henrietta Resler. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976. Paper £1.50

China: the quality of life. By Wilfred Burchett with Rewi Alley. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976. Paper 90p

China's Social Policy. By Isaac Ascher. Modern China Series No. 3. London, Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, 2nd edn. 1976. Paper, 60p

Civil War in Rhodesia: abduction, torture and death in the counter-insurgency campaign. A report compiled by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia. London, Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1976. Paper £1.00

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Death. By Mog Ball. Standpoints series. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1976. Paper

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Heredity, Environment, and Personality: a study of 850 sets of twins. By John C. Loehlin and Robert C. Nichols. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1976. Cloth

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Introduction to Empirical Sociology. By R. Mayntz, K. Holm and R. Huebner. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976. Paper £2.00

The Labour Process and Class Strategies. Edited by the Conference of Socialist Economists. London, Stage 1, 1976. Paper £1.80

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Mankind and Mother Earth. By Arnold Toynbee. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1976. Cloth £10.50

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Migration and Development. By N. Abadan-Unat, and others. Ankara, Ajans-Turk Press, 1976. Paper

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A New Look at Black Families. By C.V. Willie. New York, General Hall, 1976. Paper

Reflections of a Clyde-built Man. By Jimmy Reid. London, Souvenir Press, 1976. Paper £1.75

Report From Swaneng Hill: education and employment in an African country. By Patrick Van Rensburg. Uppsala, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, 1974. Paper £1.95

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The Rights and Wrongs of Women. Edited by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976. Paper £1.25

Rumour, Race and Riots. By Terry Ann Knopf. New Brunswick (NJ), Transaction, 1975. Cloth $12.95

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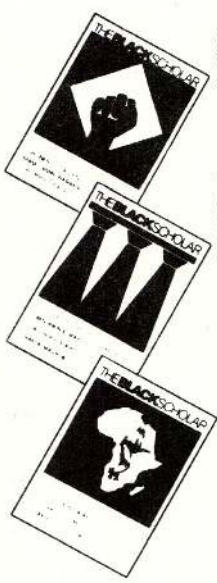

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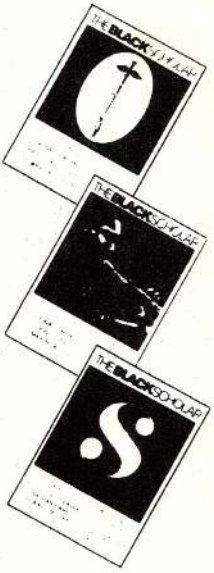

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