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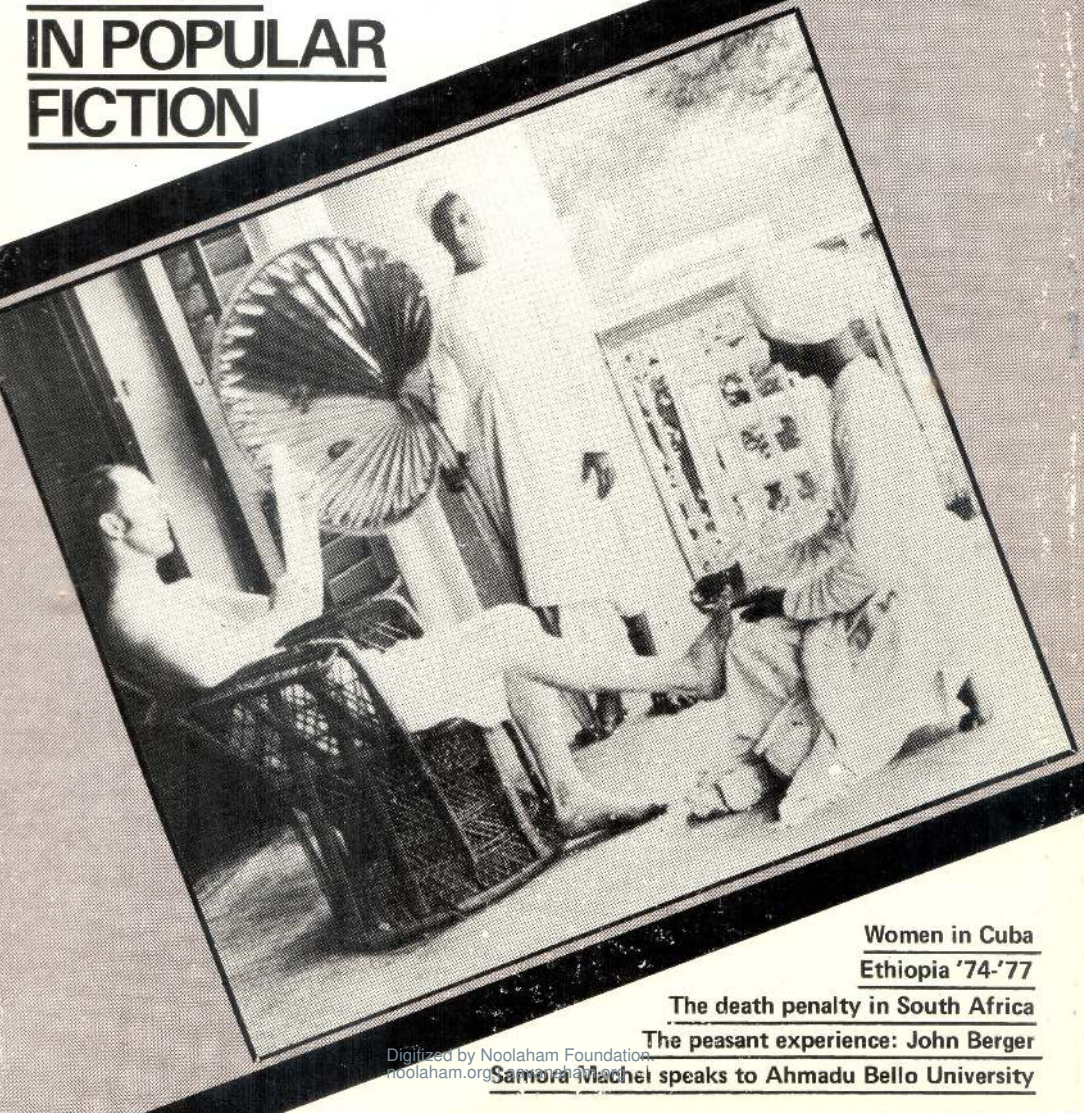
RACISM IN POPULAR FICTION



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MARGARET MARSHMENT

Racist ideology and popular fiction

The survival of a class society depends not only on the reproduction of its material conditions, but also on the reproduction in each generation of the consent of the people, including the oppressed classes, to the form of that society and their place within it, which is secured by force and by persuasion. The latter constitutes the attempt at ideological hegemony by the ruling class (described by Gramsci) whereby all classes accept and internalize as their 'common-sense' those ideas, beliefs and attitudes which serve the interests of the ruling class. In a society as complex as contemporary monopoly capitalism, this 'ideology' cannot be a single system of thought; rather, it is composed of multiple systems, interacting with each other in multiple ways, and variously received by the multitude of social groups (defined, e.g., by class, nation, race, sex, etc.) which make up that society.

The 'ideology of racism' is one such system of ideas, beliefs and attitudes, identifiable as relatively autonomous, which has formed an integral strand in the complex of ideological structures of capitalist society since its effective beginnings. Racism arose from slavery, which was integral to the growth of capitalism through imperialism: to justify the inhumanities of slavery to an age which was, however imperfectly, increasingly rejecting notions of inherited human merit, the ideology of racism presented the black slaves as subhuman; it sought to dehumanize black people ideologically, through concepts

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of naturization, reification and degradation, as slavery itself dehumanized them in practice. The imperialist age continued to use these racist concepts to justify its own forms of oppression; and contemporary neo-colonialism also uses them, selecting from and modifying the ideology to suit the changed forms of exploitation, so that racism as an ideology remains integral to the oppression of black people by monopoly capitalism, both in the 'third world' and in the metropolitan countries.

It will be argued that contemporary racism is not the same as the racism of slavery, even that 'real' racism no longer exists. This is an untenable position. It is an essential characteristic of an effective ideology that it should be flexible: it must dodge the facts that contradict its false claims, it must resolve the absurdities of opposing stereotypes (e.g. that black people are *both* servile innocents *and* savage brutes), and it must change with the times. The cohering principle of racism is simple to define: it is the assertion of the inferiority of black people relative to white people. And, throughout all the historical variations and the variations between groups and individuals in their acceptance of racism at one time, this basic premise has been retained. Nineteenth-century imperial racism was not 'the same' as twentieth-century neo-imperial racism, just as direct colonialism was not 'the same' as neo-colonialism; the racism of the working-class National Front member is not 'the same' as that of the upper-class ex-colonial officer or that of the middle-class liberal or that of the self-denigrating member of the black bourgeoisie. But all share, beneath the variations in form and emphasis, an acceptance of racism's basic claim that blacks are inherently inferior to whites. 'Racism' may be seen as a set of ideas, beliefs and attitudes, which vary through time and place and social location, but which cohere by virtue of this basic principle.

However, it must be said that history has posed a concrete challenge to the ideology of racism which renders it absurd today, in a way that was less so in the age of slavery. When millions of blacks were slaves, there was less contradiction in whites perceiving all blacks as subhuman than in a world where black people (even if only a minority) have achieved eminence in all fields (by white standards), where there are black nation states and where bourgeois science has itself consistently disproved the claims of racism. As an ideology, then, racism is more than usually moribund. It is a myth in the sense defined by Roland Barthes:

> Myth ... is a language which does not want to die: it wrests from the meanings which give it its sustenance an insidious, degraded survival, it provokes in them an artificial reprieve, in which it settles comfortably, it turns them into speaking corpses.[1]

But, as a 'speaking corpse', racism has a vital role to play in the

maintenance of international monopoly capitalism, and immense power to haunt the lives of the individuals affected, black and white.

Racism is not an isolated prejudice which can be eradicated by individual education and enlightenment (relevant as this may be). As Fanon observed: 'Racism is never a super-added element discovered by chance ... the social constellation, the cultural whole are deeply modified by the existence of racism.'[2] However, a dialectical conception of social change requires us to examine its role and challenge its hegemony as a relatively autonomous structure, rather than sit back and wait for the revolution in the hope that racism will then disappear of itself: to challenge racism is, in part, to challenge the whole system; whereas to change the economic base of the system may not necessarily be to eradicate racism, since an ideology may outlive the society which produced it.

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Literature has a special and powerful role to play in the perpetuation of ideologies. Just like any other expression of ideological thought, a literary work recreates for the changed present a form of the ideology, based on a selection from and emphasis on elements of the whole set of ideas, beliefs and attitudes which has constituted the ideology to date. The idea that literature, as 'art', is somehow separate from, even 'above', the concerns of everyday social and political life is by now widely recognized as a fallacy. Such a claim is an element of bourgeois ideology itself, which seeks either to neutralize the impact of revolutionary art or to prevent the recognition of literature's function as an active medium of reactionary ideologies. Literature is a human social activity, like any other activity, reflecting and influencing the whole society.

This is often obscured by the common restriction of the word 'art' to refer only to those creative works which are highly evaluated. But any artistic tradition consists overwhelmingly of creative works which are merely good, only mediocre or even bad: the 'great' works, selected to represent and then to define the tradition, are, in fact, always the exception.[3] It may be doubted whether even the greatest literary work, dealing as it must in language and therefore in ideas, can totally transcend ideology to attain to the so-called 'universal values' so beloved by bourgeois literary critics. If we look at the popular literature of a tradition, we see that, far from transcending ideology, such work is centrally concerned with expressing ideology. At the same time, we must answer the charge that popular fiction is ideologically irrelevant because it is 'pure entertainment'. But 'pure' entertainment is as much a fallacy as 'pure' art.

However, literature is a relatively autonomous activity within the social totality; it has its own history and traditions, and must be

analysed in terms of these if its social meanings are to be properly understood. Its role in the re-creation of an ideology such as racism can only be appreciated in its complexity and subtlety by examining how the ideology works in the fiction *as* fiction. Racism is no more a 'super-added element' in a novel than in a society — it cannot be extracted and considered as separate from or related to the fictional elements such as plot, characterization, imagery or theme, but should be seen as re-created *through* these elements.

We shall compare three of the most popular post-war British novelists in respect of their treatment of the ideology of racism. Ian Fleming, Nicholas Monsarrat and Nevil Shute have all written best-sellers, and their works continue to enjoy wide distribution both through sales and public library lendings. The fact of popularity has a twofold significance: on the one hand, it indicates that the work is responding with a particular accuracy to current social forces and can therefore be taken as reflecting these at some level; on the other hand, it can be assumed to have significant influence upon the society, for we may accept the commonsense view that people are influenced by what they read as by any other experience.

Formal realism is the major 'convention' of contemporary fictions: in the novel, theatre, cinema, television drama — in most of the 'popular' media — the world portrayed purports overwhelmingly to be, on the surface, the real world of everyday life, representing possible real activities of possible real people. It is the broad convention within which all three of these authors work.

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Fleming's novels are written within a highly conventionalized form, which may be roughly defined as the adventure/spy genre. The secret agent is a detective serving the state; but James Bond's missions are as much adventurous exploits as investigations. The twelve books are linked by all having Bond as the hero, all sharing a similar plot structure and other elements such as the characters of villain, aide and heroine, or situations such as the card game or underwater exploit. So, in addition to drawing on the conventions both of the adventure story and of detective fiction, Fleming establishes conventions internal to his own corpus.

The importance of these conventions cannot be over-emphasized. They are not incidental to the message of the works, as is so often claimed by critics who deal with a literary convention by denying it meaning as a merely *formal* element; on the contrary, a literary convention functions precisely as a *carrier* of meaning. For example, the conventional confrontation between hero and villain embodies not only the message that good and evil conflict, but also that good and evil may exist in such clarity, and that where the hero is

conventionally victorious, good inevitably and easily (because conventionally) overcomes evil. In addition, the hero/villain opposition, as defined by the plot conventions, itself then defines what *is* good and evil. The process is a circular one. By occupying the role of hero, Bond embodies the values of the cause he champions; at the same time, that cause is affirmed as 'good' because it is championed by the hero of the fiction. Bond's 'cause' is 'England': the England of the white, upper-class male — nationalistic, elitist, sexist, racist, materialistic and, above all, anti-communist. He embodies the values of capitalist society, as the villains embody the enemies of that society. And the relationship between villain and ideology is equally circular: villains such as Rosa Klebb (*From Russia with Love*) and Mr Big (*Live and Let Die*) are villains by virtue of their conventional roles in the fictions; they are assumed to be evil because they work for the enemy (Russian communism), but then Russian communism is defined as evil through its representation by villainous characters like Rosa Klebb and Mr Big. Very rarely do the Bond books make explicit attacks on communism: partly, they do not need to because the fiction itself does so; partly, to do so would be to expose this absurd circularity in the books' logic.

The basic perspective of all the Bond books is pro-capitalist: all its values slot into this overall ideology. Racism cannot be extracted and treated separately from the other ideological strands expressed. Nor can it be treated in isolation from the fictional conventions. The character of Mr Big will illustrate this clearly.

Mr Big is the major villain of *Live and Let Die* (1954). He is a black man — a Haitian, with a 'good dose of French blood',[4] and the head of a large criminal organization operating from Harlem, whose villainous exploit is the recovery of pirate treasure (from British colonial waters) to finance operations of the Russian secret service. Although his position as a criminal chief would seem sufficient explanation of his power, it is claimed that this, in fact, derives from his use of Voodoo, according to which he has encouraged the belief that he is the zombie of Baron Samedi, thereby instilling fear and obedience into the whole black population of the US and the Caribbean, since, we are told, 'the fear of Voodoo and the supernatural' is 'still deeply, primevally ingrained in the negro subconscious'.[5] By characterizing Voodoo as evil, black people generally are so characterized. Also, not only is Bond's enemy a black man, but one who is assisted (willingly or not) by every black character in the book, and thus poses a potential threat to the hero, so that the moral universe of the fiction is defined clearly in terms of black and white, not just metaphorically, but also concretely through black and white characters.

Mr Big himself is a sadistic megalomaniac who is described (even by himself) as the 'first great negro criminal'. This establishes the

scale of his villainy and therefore his worthiness as an opponent for Bond, for the hero's heroism can only be proved against 'great' villains: characters who are not only evil, but able and intelligent enough to exercise evil effectively. At the same time this greatness is relegated to the restricted achievement of the 'negro' people. Mr Big is both supra-human, possessing the cunning of the devil, and sub-human, possessing the primitive violence of the animal. His death is described at unusual length, and entirely in terms which reify his person: *the* head, *the* arm, *the* hand, etc. He is an enemy, therefore, who inspires both an awed fear requiring effort to defeat, and a contempt that renders his defeat morally irrelevant — a contradictory combination sought in all stereotyping ideologies, such as war propaganda or anti-semitism.

M claims that Mr Big's 'emergence' is part of the world-wide emergence of the 'negro races' (sic), who are 'just beginning to throw up geniuses in all the professions' so that 'it's about time they turned out a great criminal'.[6] Here we have the familiar Eurocentric version of world history, according to which history began with the white man, so that the black world — having only entered history at all with the arrival of the white world on its shores, is now seen to be 'developing' along the lines laid down by the 'civilized' world. What Mr Big represents, then, is not simply the white man's fear of the black man, but specifically of the *emergent* black man, whose emancipation will liberate, not his humanity (because this is precisely what white racism has denied him), but his unhumanity. Mr Big occupies the conventional villain's role, so that the central conflict of the fiction is Bond's fight against the threat posed by the emergent black world to the hegemony of white capitalism, because the 'first great negro criminal' is a servant of world communism. It is a threat which white racism has created for itself, both in political practice and in the ideology which justified that practice.

The character of Quarrel in the same book and in *Dr No* is calculated to dispel the fear of this threat. Quarrel is also a black man, but one who occupies the conventional role of 'aide' to the hero. His outstanding quality is loyalty to Bond, even (or perhaps especially) when Bond's enemy is also black. This loyalty is, of course, required of the hero's 'aide' by the conventions; it is at the same time the stereotypic loyalty of the 'good native' to the white man. Literary convention and racist stereotype overlap and interlock to reinforce each other. In the context of Bond's fictional battle against emergent black communism, Quarrel's character and role serve as reassurance: his likableness (established more through Bond's liking him than through objective characterization) and his docile loyalty confirm the rightness of the white man's cause; he promises not a challenge, but service; and his simple 'instinctual' goodness affirms the basic goodness of *human* nature, from which the villains

are diabolical deviations. The destruction of the villains by the heroes is thereby justified in the fiction's moral universe, which is both absolute and natural. These moral absolutes, conventional in such 'fantasy' fiction, coincide in the Bond books with the opposing systems of capitalism and communism, which are at the same time presented as opposed to each other, not only as good and bad, but as natural and unnatural. This is reinforced by the way racism, which claims a natural base for its division of humanity, slots into the conflict as an integral element of the ideological structures of capitalist society, just as Mr Big and Quarrel slot into Bond's adventures.

We may identify Fleming's fictions as myths, as Roland Barthes defines myth:

> Entrusted with 'glossing over' an intentional concept, myth encounters nothing but betrayal in language, for language can only obliterate the concept if it hides it, or unmask it if it formulates it. The elaboration of a second-order semiological system will enable myth to escape this dilemma: driven to having either to unveil or liquidate the concept, it will *naturalize* it.[7]

There is no apparent theme in mythic fiction: the message is embodied in the narrative itself, with character and action interlocked as the expression of the ideology, so that the ideological version appears as the unquestioned, the *natural* version. It creates a closed universe posing as a real world. Like classical myth, it is an ideological version of reality; but, unlike classical myth, there is no supranatural perspective — the action takes place entirely within the human realm, which is a central characteristic of formal realism. It is therefore not a myth about man's place in the universe, but about his place in society. In the popular sense of the word, mythic fiction is obviously escapist; but the fantasy it offers as an escape from the real world is not an alternative, it is a parallel. The absence of fantasy in a literal sense (in form) points to the non-fantastic quality of the content, which is ideological, and directly related to the real world. The ideology of the Bond books is that of capitalist society: anti-communist, competitive, elitist, chauvinist, sexist, racist. None of these concepts is explicit, yet none is anything but obvious. They are so embodied in the narrative structure and the characterization as to appear 'natural'. To accept the 'story' is to accept the ideology, just as to accept Bond as the hero is to accept the social values he champions, because the value system of Bond's mythic world is one that is 'taken for granted', it 'goes without saying', is stated — through the fiction — as 'fact', which cannot be questioned without questioning the fictional form itself.

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Monsarrat's fiction works very differently, and the place of racism within it is also very different. His works on Africa (*The Tribe that Lost its Head*, 1956, and *Richer than all his Tribe*, 1968) also deal with the challenge of the colonized black world to its colonial masters. Both novels concern the relations between the British colonial government and its (imaginary) African colony, Pharamaul, during and after the period of direct colonial rule. The colonial system was based, as Abiola Irele has said, 'on a social division determined by the colour line',[8] with the ideological strand of racism functioning as imperialism's dominant ideological support.

Racism does not 'slot' into Monsarrat's works: it is the dominant ideological element, the fundamental assumption on which the fiction is based. For the 'subject' of these novels is imperialism itself.

In his autobiography, Monsarrat states that one of his aims in writing *The Tribe that Lost its Head* was to celebrate British colonialism: 'The book, if it took any particular standpoint, was in praise of British colonial history and administration'.[9] His 'if' is disingenuous. This affirmative message about British colonialism is repeatedly and explicitly expounded throughout the novel, as throughout the later one. The British empire is interpreted as the civilizing mission which imperialist ideology claimed (and still claims) it to be, and the civil servants who administered it presented as the heroes of the novel, as 'dedicated exiles' who suffer unrewarded in their historic mission to civilize the 'savage'. The Africans are primarily presented and defined as children: one administrator feels for them 'as a benevolent father feels whose backward sons will never quite grow up', and the young western-educated chief shares his master's judgment of his own people:

> They were like children — Dinamaula had no illusions about the fact: smart, flip children in the south; ... dull, cloddish children at Gamate; cruel magic-ridden children in the wild north ... He was their chief, their father.[10]

But the intended political implications of this conventional stereotyping — that such childlike people need the control and protection of others — is constantly contradicted by the narrated events of the fiction. The central contradiction of *The Tribe that Lost its Head* is between these narrated events and the authorial interpretation of them (also a component of the fiction). Purportedly in praise of British colonialism, this novel narrates, not a utopian vision of simple natives progressing peacefully under their benevolent rulers, as the ideology claims, but the story of a mass uprising against a repressive colonial rule; an uprising which is well organized and popularly supported, comprising boycotts, strikes and military operations. Blind adherence to imperialist ideology, and contempt for the humanity of Africans, prevent the author from defining the opposition he

describes for what it is; instead, he resorts to exactly the kind of interpretation being made in Kenya at the time in response to Mau Mau. The African political opposition is interpreted as a secret society and accused of constituting a 'return to savagery'. Its savage repression by the colonial regime is consequently interpreted as the restoration of peace and order. The novel concludes with a false impression of compromise in a situation of clear defeat and victory by force of arms, while the future is anticipated as a time of slow and steady progress, expressing an evolutionary view of history which the revolutionary action of the novel contradicts.

This contradiction arises both from the narrative need for excitement and conflict, with the British colonialists proving their heroism, and from the work's failure to deal with the real historical contradictions in its subject. These real contradictions are present in the narrative due to the work's formal realism; but they are ignored in the authorial interpretation (the other component of the fiction) in favour of an ideological explanation of imperialism in terms of racism which aims to obscure these real contradictions. Racism itself dominates over class or cold-war ideologies, as is made explicit in *Richer than all his Tribe* when the newly-independent Pharamaul acquires nuclear weapons and threatens 'white' civilization, including the USSR. Thus, the subordinate role of racism as an ideology within the ideological structures of capitalist society is lost in assigning it the dominant role. Humanity is divided primarily into black and white, and human history into a black/white conflict. Both the Pharamaul novels convey the message that civilization is white, savagery black; in the earlier book (written before the 'independence' of any African colony) 'civilization' wins, which is a 'happy ending'; in the second book (written after the 'independence' of most of black Africa) 'savagery' wins and threatens the end of the world, which follows inevitably upon the defeat of the white man according to the ideology of racism.

These works may be seen as examples of the 'epic novel', aiming at totality. In *The Theory of the Novel*, Georg Lukacs draws a distinction betwen the epic and the novel in respect of their means of attaining to a vision of totality:

> The epic gives form to a totality of life that is rounded from within; the novel seeks, by giving form, to uncover and construct, the concealed totality of life.[11]

The epic novel attempts to bridge this distinction by showing the totality as given, but, as it were, 'rounded from without' by the controlling ideology, in this case, the ideology of racism. Formally, the totality is uneconomically expressed through the pretension to comprehensiveness: the mere length of the work, encompassing a large number of characters and a great variety of incident, is

indicative of this aim. The subject of the narrative is typically historical, exemplifying a contemporary political theme, so, often dealing with contemporary political events.

Because Monsarrat's mode of formal realism, corresponding to the use of history as the fiction's subject, is so documentary that the novel may read like barely fictionalized history, the ideological theme demands expression as interpretation. Like mythic fiction, epic fiction aims to naturalize history, but the narrated events are too close to actual history to be relied upon without the risk of a 'misinterpretation' which would contradict the intended ideological message; therefore, epic fiction often resorts to constant ideological explanation. This produces the sort of contradictions informing Monsarrat's works, where racism is introduced to 'explain' events that do not explain themselves.

Like the classic epic, the epic novel celebrates a society. But the latter is a celebration in the face of an attack both theoretic and practical, so that its defensive stance is transparent. This finally reveals the system itself to be the work's real 'hero', for there are no characters of epic stature, none, indeed, of truly human stature. The descendants of the epic hero are to be found, not among the conformist functionaries of contemporary empires, but in the generic protagonists of mythic fiction: the detective, spy, western gunman, etc. These are lone champions of the system's values who, locked in their myths, embody society's contradictions and thereby overcome them. Such heroes are permitted 'faults' because these are not only outweighed by their heroism, but are essential to it, their violence and cunning needed for their victories over their enemies.

But the documentary realism of epic fiction cannot but minimize the individual's significance: the glorified system requires bureaucratic ciphers, distinguished by loyalty and efficiency rather than initiative and individuality, who are the system's servants rather than its champions. Thus the celebration of the system involves the celebration of the 'average' man — as characterless as a statistic — with whom the supposed 'average' reader is expected to identify. He embodies the undefined abstraction of 'civilization' in conflict with the equally abstract concept of 'savagery' embodied in the stereotyped African masses. The ideology is explicit and the characterization and action correspondingly flat.

In its pretensions to totality, with its treatment of the average in the service of abstractions, epic fiction of this sort is the reverse of the 'typical' as defined by Lukacs as the novel's central method.[12]

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Nevil Shute's fiction, on the other hand, does appear to work with the 'typical'. It concentrates the narrative upon one or two individuals,

through whom social themes are expressed. In this sense, his work is more 'domestic', and directly in the mainstream of the novel tradition, with its emphasis on the single protagonist; but the relationship between individual and society is one of harmony rather than the classical one of conflict. Shute's fictional world is one where, given individual effort and initiative, society proves an amenable context for individual fulfilment, material, emotional and ethical. Through these success stories the fictions re-create the classic bourgeois ideology of individualism: the individual is free to achieve personal fulfilment and takes responsibility for failure. Shute's 'hero' is an 'ordinary' person, usually involved in 'ordinary' life, but even where the context is extreme (such as war, terminal illness or even the end of the world) he responds without intensity, accommodating himself without fundamental conflict. Like the hero of myth or epic, he is at one with his society; in his modest way, its champion.

Only at the start of the bourgeois period, when the bourgeoisie was a dynamic, ascendant class, could capitalist man fulfil this heroic role authentically. Later, when the ideals of bourgeois liberalism and rationalism were seen to be contradicted by the exploitation of bourgeois class rule, the novel assumed what Ernst Fischer calls its 'essential function' to 'analyse and criticise society'.[13]

The 'ordinariness' of Shute's characters suggests how he is able to use this mode to celebrate instead of criticize capitalism. These characters have modest aspirations, aiming only at a comfortable life within the system, not a great one. This requires of them, not the aggressive virtues demanded by a dynamic society, so much as the passive virtues of conformity. If the character's ambition is a little greater, as with the entrepreneurial capitalist hero of *Round the Bend*, its fulfilment is paid for by some loss of emotional satisfaction (but not at the expense of his conscience). The emergent picture is of a kind of democratic poetic justice, which itself affirms the justice of the 'democracies'.

Within this liberal vision overt racism has no place: all individuals are assumed to be equal, and racism is explicitly rejected. Shute's message in this respect is an unequivocal affirmation of the 'sameness under the skin' of all humanity. This is a major theme of *The Chequer Board* (1947), in which the novel's basically good, but unattractive, hero concludes with reference to 'these coloured people' that 'there don't seem to be nothing different at all between us and them, only the colour of the skin'.[14] He makes this judgment in connection with two of the novel's three plots, which narrate the wartime experiences of, on the one hand, a black American soldier in an English village, and on the other, an English pilot in Burma. Both stories end with happy inter-racial marriages in a social context of racial harmony. Both the black characters (the black American who marries an English girl and the Burmese wife of the pilot) are

thoroughly idealized in the service of this harmonious message. This idealization successfully denies the claims of racism, but does so in terms that are inadequate in their failure to recognize the full (including fallible and contradictory) humanity of black people who are thereby re-incorporated within racism. More, the form this idealization takes is that of conforming to the image of passive virtue required of the oppressed: docile, loyal, polite, etc. — they lack not only faults but vitality. In this they resemble all Shute's characters, but to an exaggerated degree, so that their incorporation into a class society is at the lower levels sanctioned by the ideology of racism.

This implication is more explicit in *Round the Bend*, where the hero, Tom Cutter, is able to prosper as an entrepreneurial capitalist largely because of his willingness and ability to super-exploit black labour. Cutter's racial liberalism allows him to employ black labour in roles which conservative enterprises, because of racism, deny them, such as pilots and engineers. Because black labour is cheaper than white (blacks earn one-quarter the white rate), Cutter can undercut his competitors in the air charter business in the Middle East and Asia and build up his capital from almost nothing. Racism as an ideology had come to obstruct capitalist progress: liberalism serves neo-colonialism better.

In other novels (e.g. *A Town Like Alice*, 1950, and *In the Wet*, 1953) the expediency of this liberalism is revealed in the setting of Australia, where the exploitation of black Australian labour is accepted as part of the social landscape, and its concomitants of social apartheid not only accepted, but advocated as part of the proper order. Black Australians are referred to as 'boongs' and 'abos' and generally presented as less than human. The final perspective of these works is conservative and elitist, adhering to capitalist values, including, where appropriate, racism.

Significantly, the more overtly political of Shute's novels, such as *In the Wet*, are also more overtly conservative, *and* more epic in form; whereas Monsarrat's more domestic works, such as *The Pillow Fight* (1965), are more liberal. The implication that there is a connection between the mode of formal realism employed and the variant of the ideology expressed is inescapable, if in need of further testing. Inherent in the epic mode (even part of its definition) is an explicit vision of a totality which is glorified. A genuine totality includes interrogation of reality and embraces the consequent contradictions. A totality constructed on strictly ideological grounds can allow of no genuine contradictions, especially when the ideology is historically on the defensive. The liberal vision allows for compromise, but the aim of 'totality' is hostile to it, so the epic mode leans towards the reactionary and dogmatic, rather than more progressive and open forms. At the same time, we see that the liberal compromise

of the domestic fictional mode conveys but a partial vision. The focus on the individual does not extend to a vision of the individual's total context and his 'typicality', but remains at the level of empirical 'averages'.

We may see, then, that a dominant ideology is capable of considerable variation, including versions which appear in opposition to each other, as with the variants of racism expressed in the works of Fleming, Monsarrat and Shute. At the same time, these variants are not ultimately incompatible: they share elements and a common cohering principle, and they relate in varying ways to the same total dominant ideological structure — just as, while employing different modes of realism, all three authors are working within the general frame of formal realism.

This form, which novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries forged to express and expose the new bourgeois reality, has been harnessed to express an ideology which both claims that reality as contemporary and affirms it optimistically. In certain basic respects that reality continues to exist, but it is so changed and has been so radically challenged as to have required the creation of literary forms as different, for example, as those of Kafka and Brecht to express it. The popular novelist who adopts a traditional form and applies it unquestioningly to contemporary reality will inevitably rob that form of its content and fail to express reality except in its ideological version. In this way the moribund realism of contemporary fiction perpetuates an ideology that is also moribund. As theory and as practice, the moribund ideology of racism is integral to, and inseparable from, capitalist society. In form and content, it is likewise integral to, and inseparable from, the fiction of Fleming, Monsarrat and Shute. Such fiction constitutes a significant element in the ideological superstructure of capitalist society, and shares with other elements (e.g. television, newspapers, the 'academic' research of such as Eysenck, etc.) certain dominant formal and ideological features. Ultimately, these works form part of the process whereby the members of our society are encouraged to accept their subordination to the class rule of monopoly capitalism. In relation specifically to racism, this means that they re-create from the existing stock of ideological concepts and fictional forms a version of the myth of white superiority and black inferiority which will continue to function in and for the contemporary world, in short, to perpetuate racism itself.

A.S. Vazquez defines the ideological role of mass art as

> ... to keep mass man in his place, make him feel at home in his

mass being and close the windows through which he might catch a glimpse of a truly human world — and with it the possibility of becoming conscious of his alienation as well as the means of abolishing it.[15]

If these examples of mass art seem only too successful in fulfilling this ideological role, it must be remembered that they do so in defiance of a reality which requires of them ever more covert and sophisticated means. It is because realism is intrinsically opposed to ideological myth that what Barthes calls the 'crude myth of realism' [16] has developed, so that the form may be exploited to mystify rather than trusted to illuminate. It may be that contemporary capitalist society can, more than most, incorporate opposition within its dominant structures, and that 'myth can reach everything, corrupt everything',[17] but the need for a constant re-creative flexibility in the reproduction of ideological myth may itself be seen as evidence of the revolutionary challenge to the ruling ideologies. The more successful example of mass art (taking popularity as the measure of success) has a vitality which enables it to express convincingly the myth of the moment, but in this often lies its intrinsically ephemeral nature. The Bond cult has already waned; Monsarrat and Shute, expressing less immediate but more 'realistic' versions of the ideology, seem to possess more staying power, but one cannot imagine it to be more than a reprieve, before they too are superseded by new and necessary revisions of the myth.

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JOHN BERGER

Towards understanding peasant experience

The peasantry as a class is the oldest in existence. It has shown remarkable powers of survival — powers which have puzzled and confused most administrators and theorists. In fact, as I want to argue, the essential character of the peasantry — whether one is thinking of rice-growing peasants in Java, wheat-growing peasants in Scandanavia or maize-growing peasants in South America, despite all the important differences of climate, religion, economic and social history, the essential character of the peasantry actually derives from its being a class of survivors. It is often said that the majority of people in the world today are still peasants. Yet this fact masks a more significant one. For the first time ever it is possible that the class of survivors may not survive. Within a century there may be no more peasants. In western Europe, if the plans work out as the economic planners have foreseen, there will be no more peasants within twenty-five years. Such an unprecedented transformation of the world — whether it is for better or worse — demands consideration.

Most economists and historians would, I think, accept Teodor Shanin's definition of a peasantry:

> The peasantry consists of small agricultural producers who with the help of simple equipment and the labour of their families produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfilment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power.[1]

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Until recently, the peasant economy has always been an economy within an economy. This is what has enabled it to survive global transformations of the larger economy — feudal, capitalist, even socialist. What changed with these transformations was not the peasant's mode of struggle for survival, but the methods used for extracting a surplus from him: compulsory labour services, tithes, rents, taxes, sharecropping, interests on loans, production norms, etc.

Unlike any other working and exploited class, the peasantry has always supported itself and this made it, to some degree, a class apart. In so far as it produced the necessary surplus, it was integrated into the historical economic/cultural system. In so far as it supported itself, it was on the frontier of that system. And I think one can say this, even where and when peasants make up the majority of the population.

If one thinks of the hierarchical structure of feudal or Asian societies as being roughly pyramidal, the peasantry were on the base frontier of the triangle. This meant, as with all frontier populations, that the political and social system offered them the minimum of protection. For this they had to look to themselves — within the village community and the extended family. They maintained or developed their own unwritten laws and codes of behaviour, their own rituals and beliefs, their own orally transmitted body of wisdom and knowledge, their own medicine, their own techniques and sometimes their own language. It would be wrong to suppose that all this constituted an independent culture, unaffected by the dominant one and by its economic, social or technical developments. Peasant life did not stay exactly the same throughout the centuries, but the priorities and values of peasants (their strategy for survival) remained constant and were embedded in a tradition which outlasted any tradition in the rest of society. The undeclared relation of this peasant tradition, at any given moment, to the dominant class culture was often heretical and subversive. 'Don't run away from anything', says the Russian peasant proverb, 'but don't do anything.' The peasant's universal reputation of *cunning* is a recognition of this secretive and subversive tendency.

The fact that peasants, producing the food for the rest of society, are an essential part of that society and yet, at the same time, are, in some ways, separate from it, leads back to the dual nature of the peasant economy. Peasant experience is incomprehensible unless one takes account of this and learns to see their dual economy in peasant terms. (All peasant thinking is dualistic, accepting the co-existence of contradictions; where logicians use the word *but*, they employ the word *and*.) No class has been or is more economically conscious than the peasantry. Economics consciously determines or influences every ordinary decision which a peasant takes.

But his economics are not those of the merchant, nor those of bourgeois or marxist political economy. The man who wrote with most understanding about lived peasant economics was the Russian agronomist Chayanov. Anyone who wishes to understand the peasant, should, among other things, go back to Chayanov.[2]

The peasant did not conceive of what was extracted from him as a surplus. One might argue that the politically unconscious proletarian is equally unaware of the surplus value he creates for his employer, yet the comparison is misleading — for the worker, working for wages in a money economy, can be easily deceived about the value of what he produces, whereas the peasant's *economic* relation to the rest of society was always transparent. His family produced or tried to produce what they needed to live on, and he saw part of this produce, the result of his family's labour, being appropriated by those who had not laboured. The peasant was perfectly aware of what was being extracted from him, yet he did not think of this as a surplus for two reasons, the first material and the second epistemological. 1) It was not a surplus because his family needs had not already been assured. 2) A surplus is an end-product, the result of a long-completed process of working and of meeting requirements. To the peasant, however, his enforced social obligations assumed the form of a *preliminary obstacle*. The obstacle was often insurmountable. But it was on the other side of it that the other half of the peasant economy operated, whereby his family worked the land to assure its own needs.

A peasant might think of his imposed obligations as a natural duty, or as some inevitable injustice, but in either case they were something which had to be endured *before* the struggle for survival opened. He had first to work for his masters, later for himself. Even if he were sharecropping, the master's share came *before* the basic needs of his family. If the word were not too light in the face of the almost unimaginable burden of labour placed on the peasant, one might say that his enforced obligations assumed the form of a permanent handicap. It was *despite this* that the family had to open the already uneven struggle with nature to gain by their own work their own subsistence.

Thus the peasant had to survive the permanent handicap of having a 'surplus' taken from him; he had to survive, in the subsistence half of his economy, all the hazards of agriculture — bad seasons, storms, droughts, floods, pests, accidents, impoverished soil, animal and plant diseases, crop failures; and furthermore, at the base frontier, with the minimum of protection, he had to survive social, political and natural catastrophes — wars, plagues, brigands, fire, pillaging, etc.

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The word *survivor* has two meanings. It denotes somebody who has survived an ordeal. And it also denotes a person who has continued to live when others disappeared or perished. It is in this second sense that I am using the word in relation to the peasantry. Peasants were those who remained working, as distinct from the many who died young, emigrated or became paupers. At certain periods those who survived were certainly a *minority*. Demographic statistics give some idea of the dimensions of the disasters. The population of France in 1320 was 17 million. A little over a century later it was 8 million. By 1550 it had climbed to 20 million. Forty years later it fell to 18 million.[3]

In 1789 the population was 27 million, of whom 22 million were rural. The revolution and the scientific progress of the nineteenth century offered the peasant land and physical protection such as he had not known before; at the same time they exposed him to capital and the market economy; by 1848 the great peasant exodus to the cities had begun and by 1900 there were only 8 million French peasants. The deserted village has probably almost always been — and certainly is again today — a feature of the countryside: it represents a site of no survivors.

A comparison with the proletariat in the early stages of the industrial revolution may clarify what I mean by a class of survivors. The working and living conditions of the early proletariat condemned millions to early death or disabling illness. Yet the class as a whole, its numbers, its capacity, its power, was growing. It was a class engaged in, and submitting to, a process of continual transformation and increase. It was not the victims of its ordeals who determined its essential class character, as in a class of survivors, but rather its demands and those who fought for them.

By contrast the peasantry was engaged in a holding operation with no more than the hope of maintaining life such as it was. The statistics, already quoted concerning France (and other countries within or beyond Europe would show the same tendencies), reveal that during four centuries the peasant population scarcely, if ever, increased, and often catastrophically decreased.

From the eighteenth century onwards populations all over the world mounted, at first slowly and later dramatically. Yet for the peasantry this general experience of a new security of life could not overlay its class memory of earlier centuries, because the new conditions, including those brought about by improved agricultural techniques, entailed new threats: the large-scale commercialization and colonialization of agriculture, the inadequacy of ever smaller plots of land to support entire families, hence large-scale emigration to the cities where the sons and daughters of peasants were absorbed into another class.

The nineteenth-century peasantry was still a class of survivors, with

the difference that those who disappeared were no longer those who ran away or who died as a result of famine and disease, but those who were forced to abandon the village and become wage earners. One should add that under these new conditions a few peasants became rich, but in doing so they also ceased, within a generation or two, to be peasants.

To say that peasants are a class of survivors may seem to confirm what the cities with their habitual arrogance have always said about peasants — that they are *backward*, a relic of the past. Peasants themselves, however, do not share the view of time implicit in such a judgement.

Inexhaustibly committed to wresting a life from the earth, bound to the present of endless work, the peasant nevertheless sees life as an interlude. This is confirmed by his daily familiarity with the cycle of birth, life and death. Such a view may predispose him to religion, yet religion is not at the origin of his attitude and, anyway, the religion of peasants has never fully corresponded with the religion of rulers and priests.

The peasant sees life as an interlude because of the dual contrary movement through time of his thoughts and feelings which in turn again derives from the dual nature of the peasant economy. His dream is to *return* to a life that is not handicapped. His determination is to *hand on* the means of survival (if possible made more secure, compared to what he inherited) to his children. His ideals are located in the past; his obligations are to the future, which he himself will not live to see. After his death he will not be transported into the future — such a notion of immortality is inconceivable to him: he will return to the past.

These two movements, towards the past and the future, are not as contrary as they might first appear because basically the peasant has a cyclic view of time. The two movements are different ways of going round a circle. He accepts the sequence of centuries without making that sequence absolute. Those who have a unilinear view of time cannot come to terms with the idea of cyclic time (it creates a moral vertigo since all their morality is based on cause and effect); those who have a cyclic view of time are easily able to accept the convention of historic time, which is simply the trace of the turning wheel.

The peasant imagines an unhandicapped life, a life in which he is not first forced to produce a surplus before feeding himself and his family, as a primal state of being which existed before the advent of injustice. Food is man's first need. Peasants work on the land to produce food to feed themselves. Yet they are forced to feed others first, often at the price of going hungry themselves. They see the grain in the fields which they have worked and harvested — on their own land or on the landowner's — being taken away to feed others, or

to be sold for the profit of others. However much a bad harvest is considered an act of God, however much the master/landowner is considered a natural master, whatever ideological explanations are given, the basic fact is clear: they who can feed themselves are instead being forced to feed others. Such an injustice, the peasant reasons, cannot always have existed so he asumes a just world at the beginning. At the beginning a primary state of justice towards the primary work of satisfying man's primary need. All spontaneous peasant revolts have had the aim of *resurrecting* a just and egalitarian peasant society.*

This dream is not the usual version of the dream of paradise. Paradise, as we now understand it, was surely the invention of a relatively leisured class. In the peasant's dream work is still necessary. Work is the condition for equality. Both the bourgeois and marxist ideals of equality presume a world of plenty; they demand equal rights for all before a cornucopia, a cornucopia to be constructed by science and the advancement of knowledge; what the two understand by equal rights is of course very different. The peasant ideal of equality recognizes a world of scarcity, and its promise is for mutual fraternal aid in struggling against this scarcity and a just sharing of what the work produces. Closely connected with the peasant's recognition, as a survivor, of scarcity, is his recognition of man's relative ignorance. He may admire knowledge and the fruits of knowledge but he never supposes that the advance of knowledge reduces the extent of the unknown. This non-antagonistic relation between the unknown and knowing explains why some of his knowledge is accommodated in what, from the outside, is defined as superstition and magic. Nothing in his experience encourages him to believe in final causes, *precisely because his experience is so wide*. The unknown can only be eliminated within the limits of a laboratory experiment. Those limits seem to him to be naive.

Opposing the movement of the peasant's thoughts and feelings about a justice in the past are other thoughts and feelings directed towards the survival of his children in the future. Most of the time the latter are stronger and more conscious. The two movements balance each other only in so far as together they convince him that *the interlude of the present cannot be judged in its own terms*; morally it

*Ernst Bloch, in his unique study of the peasant revolutionary, *Thomas Munzer* (first published in German in 1921; French translation, Paris, 1964), wrote as follows about the Peasant War. 'And so, at that time, they wanted above all to be rid of every arbitrary and contingent construction, to rediscover the condition of being young. The peasants demanded the reconstitution of their original life. It was not only necessary that things changed to their advantage, but that things also returned to exactly where they once were, when men were *free*, in the bosom of free communities, when the countryside in its original freshness was open to everyone as communal land.'

is judged in relation to the past, materially it is judged in relation to the future. Strictly speaking, nobody is less opportunist (taking the immediate opportunity regardless) than the peasant.

How do peasants think or feel about the future? Because their work involves intervening in or aiding an organic process most of their actions are future-oriented. The planting of a tree is an obvious example, but so, equally, is the milking of a cow: the milk is for cheese or butter. Everything they do is anticipatory — and therefore never finished. They envisage this future, to which they are forced to pledge their actions, as a series of ambushes. Ambushes of risks and dangers. The most likely future risk, until recently, was hunger. The fundamental contradiction of the peasant's situation, the result of the dual nature of the peasant economy, was that they who produced the food were the most likely to starve. A class of survivors cannot afford to believe in an arrival point of assured security or well-being. The only, but great, future hope is survival. This is why the dead do better to return to the past where they are no longer subject to risk. Perhaps this also helps to explain why personalized ambition is somewhat rarer among peasants than other classes; there are no goals of assurance.

The future path through future ambushes is a continuation of the old path by which the survivors from the past have come. The image of a path is apt because it is by following a path, created and maintained by generations of walking feet, that some of the dangers of the surrounding forests or mountains or marshes may be avoided. The path is tradition handed down by instructions, example and commentary. To a peasant the future *is* this future narrow path across an indeterminate expanse of known and unknown risks. When peasants co-operate to fight an outside force, and the impulse to do this is always defensive, they adopt a guerrilla strategy — which is precisely a network of narrow paths across an indeterminate hostile environment.

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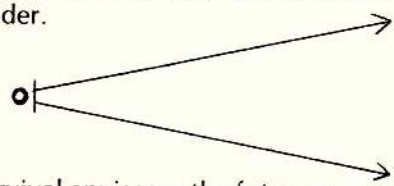
The peasant view of human destiny, such as I am outlining, was not, until the advent of modern history, essentially different from the view of other classes. One has only to think of the poems of Chaucer, Villon, Dante; in all of them Death, whom nobody can escape, is the surrogate for a generalized sense of uncertainty and menace in face of the future.

Modern history begins — at different moments in different places — with the principle of progress as both the aim and motor of history. This principle was born with the bourgeoisie as an ascendant class, and has been taken over by all modern theories of revolution. The twentieth-century struggle between capitalism and socialism, is, at

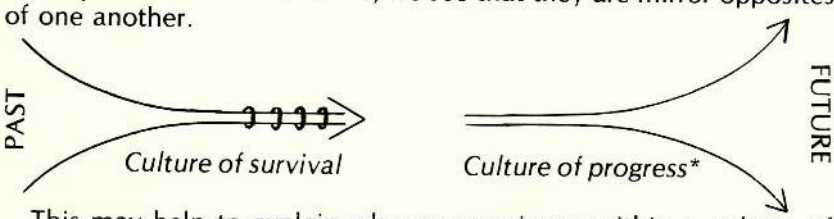
an ideological level, a fight about the content of progress. Today within the developed world the initiative of this struggle lies, at least temporarily, in the hands of capitalism which argues that socialism produces backwardness. In the underdeveloped world the 'progress' of capitalism is discredited.

Cultures of progress envisage future expansion. They are forward-looking because the future offers ever larger hopes. At their most heroic these hopes dwarf Death (*La Rivoluzione o la Morte*!). At their most trivial they ignore it (consumerism). The future is envisaged as the opposite of what classical perspective does to a road. Instead of appearing to become ever narrower as it recedes into the distance, it becomes ever wider.



A culture of survival envisages the future as a sequence of repeated acts for survival. Each act pushes a thread through the eye of a needle and the thread is tradition. No overall increase is envisaged.

If now, comparing the two types of culture, we consider their view of the past as well as the future, we see that they are mirror opposites of one another.



This may help to explain why an experience within a culture of survival can have the opposite *significance* to the comparable experience within a culture of progress. Let us take, as a key example, the much proclaimed conservatism of the peasantry, their resistance to change: the whole complex of attitudes and reactions which often (not invariably) allows a peasantry to be counted as a force for the right-wing.

First, we must note that the counting is done by the cities,

*The two categories I use here are similar to those used by Levi-Strauss to distinguish between 'cold', 'primitive' societies which preserve themselves, and 'hot' industrialized societies which internalize history and have continually to reform themselves. (See *Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss*, London, 1969.) But with the important difference that peasants never formed an autonomous society.

according to an historical scenario opposing left to right, which belongs to a culture of progress. The peasant refuses that scenario, and he is not stupid to do so, for the scenario, whether the left or right win, envisages his disappearance. His conditions of living, the degree of his exploitation and his suffering may be desperate, but he cannot contemplate the disappearance of what gives meaning to everything he knows, which is, precisely, his will to survive. No worker is ever in that position, for what gives meaning to his life is either the revolutionary hope of transforming it, or money, which is received in exchange *against his life* as a wage-earner, to be spent in his 'true life' as a consumer.

Any transformation of which the peasant dreams involves his re-becoming 'the peasant' he once was. The worker's political dream is to transform everything which up to now has condemned him to be a worker. This is one reason why an alliance between workers and peasants can only be maintained if it is for a specific aim (the defeat of a foreign enemy, the expropriation of large landowners) to which both parties are agreed. No general alliance is normally possible.

To understand the significance of peasant conservatism, related to the sum of peasant experience, we need to examine the idea of change with a different optic. It is an historical commonplace that change, questioning, experiment, flourished in the cities and emanated outwards from them. What is often overlooked is the character of everyday urban life which allowed for such an interest in research. The city offered to its citizens comparative security, continuity, permanence. The degree offered depended upon the class of the citizen, but compared to life in a village, all citizens benefited from a certain protection.

There was heating to counteract changes of temperature, lighting to lessen the difference between night and day, transport to reduce distances, relative comfort to compensate for fatigue; there were walls and other defences against attack, there was effective law, there were alms-houses and charities for the sick and aged, there were libraries of permanent written knowledge, there was a wide range of services — from bakers and butchers through mechanics and builders to doctors and surgeons — to be called upon whenever a need threatened to disrupt the customary flow of life, there were conventions of social behaviour which strangers were obliged to accept (When in Rome ...), there were buildings designed as promises of, and monuments to, continuity.

During the last two centuries, as urban theories and doctrines of change have become more and more vehement, the degree and efficacy of such everyday protection has correspondingly increased. Recently the insulation of the citizen has become almost so total that it has become suffocating. He lives alone in a serviced limbo — hence his newly-awakened but necessarily naive interest in the countryside.

By contrast the peasant is unprotected. Each day a peasant experiences more change more closely than any other class. Some of these changes, like those of the seasons or like the process of ageing and failing energy, are foreseeable; many — like the weather from one day to the next, like a cow choking to death on a potato, like lightning, like rains which come too early or too late, like fog that kills the blossom, like the continually evolving demands of those who extract the surplus, like an epidemic, like locusts — are unpredictable.

In fact the peasant's experience of change is more intense than any list, however long and comprehensive, could ever suggest. For two reasons. First, his capacity for observation. Scarcely anything changes in a peasant's entourage, from the clouds to the tail feathers of a cock, without his noticing and interpreting it in terms of the future. His active observation never ceases and so he is continually recording and reflecting upon changes. Secondly, his economic situation. This is usually such that even a slight change for the worse — a harvest which yields 25 per cent less than the previous year, a fall in the market price of the harvest produce, an unexpected expense — can have disastrous or near-disastrous consequences. His observation does not allow the slightest sign of change to pass unnoticed, and his debt magnifies the real or imagined threat of a great part of what he observes.

Peasants live with change hourly, daily, yearly, from generation to generation. There is scarcely a constant given to their lives except the constant necessity of work. Around this work and its seasons they themselves create rituals, routines and habits in order to wrest some meaning and continuity from a cycle of remorseless change: a cycle which is in part natural and in part the result of the ceaseless turning of the millstone of the dual economy within which they live.

In a few pages it is not possible to discuss the very great variety of these routines and rituals which, attaching themselves to work or the different phases of a working life (birth, marriage, death), are the peasant's own protection against a state of continual flux. I want to make only one simple point about work routines. Work routines are traditional and cyclic — they repeat themselves each year, and sometimes each day. Their tradition is repeated because it appears to assure the best chance of the work's success, but also because, in repeating the same routine, in doing the same thing in the same way as his father or his neighbour's father, the peasant assumes a continuity for himself and thus *consciously experiences his own survival*.

The repetition, however, is essentially and only formal. A work routine for a peasant is very different from most urban work routines. Each time a peasant does the same job there are elements in it which

have changed. The peasant is continually improvising. His faithfulness to tradition is never more than approximate. The traditional routine determines the ritual of the job: its content, like everything else he knows, is subject to change and flux.*

When a peasant resists the introduction of a new technique or method of working, it is not because he cannot see its possible advantages — his conservatism is neither blind nor lazy — but because he believes that these advantages cannot, by the nature of things, be guaranteed, and that, should they fail, he will then be cut off alone and isolated from the routine of survival. (Those working with peasants for improved production should take this into account. A peasant's ingenuity makes him open to change; his imagination demands continuity. Urban appeals for change are usually made on the opposite basis: ignoring ingenuity, which tends to disappear with the extreme division of labour, they promise the imagination a new life.)

Peasant conservatism, within the context of peasant experience, has nothing in common with the conservatism of a privileged ruling class or the conservatism of a sycophantic petty-bourgeoisie. The first is an attempt, however vain, to make their privileges absolute; the second is a way of siding with the powerful in exchange for a little delegated power over the working classes. Peasant conservatism scarcely defends any privilege. Which is one reason why, much to the surprise of urban political and social theorists, small peasants have so often rallied to the defence of richer peasants. It is a conservatism

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*Jean Pierre Vernant in his excellent book *Mythe et Pensée Chez les Grecs* (Vol.2, Paris, 1971) shows how the peasant in ancient Greece was distinct from the artisan precisely because his work was not considered a technique. 'When the labourer in Hesiodo's poem of *Work and Days* contributes by his effort to the growing of wheat, he has no sense of applying an agricultural technique to the earth, any more than he has a sense of a trade. He simply submits with faith to the harsh law which governs his relation to the gods. His work for him is a form of moral life...' (p.19). 'There is no technical aspect to [agricultural] work: between man's effort and the result the distance, both in time and technique, is too large. The essential occurs, thanks to what M. Dupréel has called "the aid of the interval", and this involves a religious process. Thus working the land is not a programme of efficient routines and recipes for success. It is not an action on nature in order to transform or adapt it to fit human purposes. Such a transformation, if it were possible, would be sacrilege. Rather it is a question of participating in an order which is higher than man, an order which is both natural and divine. It is in this religious context that the effort of agricultural work acquires a special significance: the completing of the daily tasks, the hard back-breaking work involved, acquire value, and prestige insofar as they establish a relation, a reciprocal link with the gods' (p.23, 24). And this leads to a peasant judgement of 'good farming' such as one still finds today, more than two thousand years later. 'Excluding the role of technique, the quality of the work reveals the quality of the man. "The earth shows up those of value and those who are good for nothing. In this field the lazy cannot pretend, as they do in others, that they just didn't know".'

not of power but of meaning. It represents a depository (a granary) of meaning preserved from lives and generations threatened by continual and inexorable change.

Many other peasant attitudes are frequently misunderstood or understood in an exactly opposite sense — as the diagram of the mirror-image has already suggested. For example, peasants are thought to be money-minded whereas, in fact, the behaviour which gives rise to this idea, derives from a profound suspicion of money. For example, peasants are said to be unforgiving, yet this trait, in so far as it is true, is the result of the belief that *life* without justice becomes meaningless. (It is rare for any peasant to die unforgiven.)

One could take other misinterpreted peasant attitudes and, by relating them to the sum of peasant experience, interpret them more correctly. Yet to do this in the abstract would become a schematic exercise. Having established the principle, the only way to go further is to enter into the contradictions and wholeness of particular cases. And for this the imagination of the story-teller is necessary. An imagination which, incidentally, is highly familiar to peasants. All villages tell stories. And these stories are distinct from urban stories in two ways: in their facticity — the result of observation and of what is incorrectly termed gossip — and in their tolerance. They are narrated neither to idealize nor to condemn; rather they testify to the always slightly surprising range of the possible. Although concerned with everyday events, they are mystery stories.

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We must now ask this question: what is the contemporary relation between peasants and the world economic system of which they form part? Or, to put this question in terms of our consideration of peasant experience, what significance can this experience have today in a global context?

Agriculture does not necessarily require peasants. The British peasantry was destroyed (except in certain areas of Ireland and Scotland) well over a century ago. In the USA there have been no peasants in modern history because the rate of economic development based on monetary exchange was too rapid and too total. In France 150,000 peasants now leave the land every year. The economic planners of the EEC envisage the systematic elimination of the peasant by the end of the century, if not before. For short-term political reasons, they do not use the word elimination but the word *modernization*. Modernization entails the disappearance of the small peasants (the majority) and the transformation of the remaining minority into totally different social and economic beings. The capital outlay for intensive mechanization and chemicalization, the

necessary size of the farm exclusively producing for the market, the specialization of produce by area, all mean that the peasant family ceases to be a productive and consuming unit, and that, instead, the peasant becomes the dependant of the interests which both finance him and buy from him. The economic pressure on which such a plan depends is supplied by the falling market value of agricultural produce. In France today the buying power of the price of one sack of wheat is three times less than it was fifty years ago. The ideological persuasion is supplied by all the promises of consumerism. An intact peasantry was the only class with an inbuilt resistance to consumerism. When a peasantry is dispersed, markets are enlarged.

In much of the Third World the systems of land tenure (in Latin America 1 per cent of landowners own 60 per cent of the farm land, and 100 per cent of the best land), the imposition of monocultures for the benefit of corporate capitalism, the marginalization of subsistence farming, and, only because of these other factors, the mounting population, cause more and more peasants to be reduced to such a degree of absolute poverty that, without land or seed or hope, they lose all previous social identity. Many of these ex-peasants make for the cities where they form a *mass such as has never existed before, a mass of static vagrants*, a mass of unemployed starving attendants: attendants in the sense that they wait in the shanty towns, cut off from the past, excluded from the benefits of progress, abandoned by tradition, serving nothing.

Engels and most early twentieth-century marxists foresaw the disappearance of the peasant in face of the greater profitability of capitalist agriculture. The capitalist mode of production would do away with small peasant production 'as a steam engine smashes a wheelbarrow'.[4] Such prophecies underestimated the resilience of the peasant economy and overestimated the attraction of agriculture for capital. On the one hand, the peasant family could survive without profitability (cost accounting was *inapplicable* to the peasant dual economy); and on the other hand, for capital, land, unlike other commodities, is not infinitely reproduceable, and investment in agricultural production finally meets a constraint and yields decreasing returns.[5]

The peasant has survived far longer than was predicted. But within the last twenty years monopoly capital, through its multinational corporations, has created the new highly-profitable structure of agribusiness whereby it controls, not necessarily the production, but the market for agricultural inputs and outputs and the processing, packaging and selling of every kind of foodstuff. The penetration of this market into all corners of the globe is eliminating the peasant. In the developed countries by more or less planned conversion: in the underdeveloped countries catastrophically. Previously cities were dependent on the countryside for their food, peasants being forced,

in one way or another, to part with their so-called surplus. Soon the world countryside may be dependent on the cities even for the food its own rural population requires. When and if this happens, peasants will have ceased to exist.

During the same period of the last twenty years, in other parts of the Third World — China, Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Algeria — revolutions have been made by peasants, and in their name. It is far too soon to know what kind of transformation of the peasant experience these revolutions will achieve, and how far their governments can or cannot maintain a different set of priorities to those imposed by the world market of capitalism.

It must follow from what I have already said that nobody can reasonably argue for the preservation and maintenance of the *traditional* peasant way of life. To do so is to argue that peasants should continue to be exploited, and that they should lead lives in which the burden of physical work is often devastating and always oppressive. As soon as one accepts that peasants are a class of survivors — in the sense in which I have defined the term — any idealization of their way of life becomes impossible. In a just world such a class would no longer exist.

Yet to dismiss peasant experience as belonging only to the past, as having no relevance to modern life, to imagine that the thousands of years of peasant culture leave no heritage for the future — simply because it was seldom embodied in lasting objects — to continue to maintain, as has been maintained for centuries, that peasant experience is marginal to civilization, is to deny the value of too much history and too many lives. No line of exclusion can be drawn across history in that manner, as if it were a line across a closed account.

The point can be made more precisely. The remarkable continuity of peasant experience and the peasant view of the world, acquires, as it is threatened with extinction, an unprecedented and unexpected urgency. It is not only the future of peasants which is now involved in this continuity. The forces which in most parts of the world are today eliminating or destroying the peasantry, represent the contradiction of most of the hopes once contained in the principle of historical progress. Productivity is not reducing scarcity. The dissemination of knowledge is not leading to greater democracy. The advent of leisure — in the industrialized societies — has not brought personal fulfilment but greater mass manipulation. The economic and military unification of the world has not brought peace but genocide. The peasant suspicion of 'progress', as it has finally been imposed by the global history of corporate capitalism and by the power of this history even over those seeking an alternative to it, is not altogether misplaced or groundless.

Such a suspicion cannot in itself form the basis for an alternative political development. The precondition for such an alternative is

that peasants should achieve a world view of themselves as a class, and this implies — not their elimination — but their achieving power as a class· a power which, in being achieved, would transform their class experience and character.

Meanwhile, if one looks at the likely future course of world history, envisaging either the further extension and consolidation of corporate capitalism in all its brutalism, or a prolonged, uneven struggle waged against it, a struggle whose victory is not certain, the peasant experience of survival may well be better adapted to this long and harsh perspective than the continually reformed, disappointed, impatient progressive hope of an ultimate victory.

Finally there is the historic role of capitalism itself, a role unforeseen by Adam Smith or Marx: its ultimate historic role is to destroy history, to sever every link with the past and to orientate all effort and imagination to that which is about to occur. Capital can only exist as such if it continually reproduces itself; its present reality is dependent upon its future fulfilment. This is the metaphysic of capital. The word *credit*, instead of referring to a past achievement, refers only in this metaphysic, to a future expectation. How such a metaphysic eventually came to inform a world system, how it has been translated into the practice of consumerism, how it has lent its logic to the categorization of those, whom the system impoverishes, as *backward* (i.e. bearing the stigma and shame of the past), is beyond the scope of this essay. Henry Ford's remark that 'History is bunk' has generally been underestimated; he knew exactly what he was saying. Destroying the peasantries of the world could be the final act of historical elimination.

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Note: I would like to acknowledge my considerable debt to criticisms, made of an earlier version of the above text, by Anthony Barnett, Catherine Lawton and Teodor Shanin.

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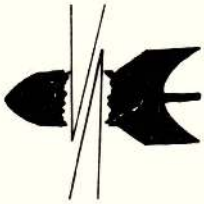

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CAROLLEE BENGELSDORF and ALICE HAGEMAN

Emerging from underdevelopment: women and work in Cuba

That the coming of the Revolution and the systematic destruction of neo-colonial economic and political structures have meant a profound change in the lives of women in Cuba is beyond doubt. One has only to look at the statistics and to think what free health care, free education, free housing and a legal system growing out of the people's specific needs and shaped by them would mean in our own lives. One has only to talk to any 40-year-old Cuban woman, to watch her eyes as she discusses the difference between her life before 1959, and her life now, as she describes her pride in what she and her neighbours have seen come to pass around them, shaped by their own hands and their own efforts. One has only to spend time with any 20-year-old Cuban woman to understand that she is completely free of areas of conflict (the anxiety of economic dependence on a man, for example) which we ourselves will never totally overcome.

That oppression still exists is also beyond doubt; it is obvious in almost every aspect of a Cuban woman's life. The same woman who drives a tractor or studies at a sugar engineering school, must daily confront the possessive imposition of a dozen commenting males every time she walks down the street. A National Heroine of Labour, who has cut more than a million pounds of sugar cane, will worry about the condition of her fingernails. The anniversary of the attack on Moncada, the attack which launched the final phase of the Cuban

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revolutionary struggle, is still celebrated with something that resembles a beauty contest to choose the female 'star' of the occasion and her court.

A socialist society is, by definition, a transitional society: it is the period during which the vestiges of previous class structures are to be destroyed. In an underdeveloped country like Cuba it is also the period during which the material abundance upon which communism is based has to be created. But the oppression that continues to exist in Cuba is not simply the result of the transition to socialism in an underdeveloped country. The Cuban experience demonstrates that the systematic destruction of the bases of capitalism does not, in and of itself, spell the end of the patriarchal nexus that provided these bases with sustenance. It demonstrates, in human terms, the complexity of rooting out the paraphernalia of patriarchy. And it demonstrates, as well, that it is only when the fundamentals of capitalism are gone, that a frontal attack on the oppression of all women can be launched.

In what follows, we examine the changes which have taken place in one aspect of women's lives: their participation in the labour force.*

THE TASK AHEAD

In 1969 and 1970, during the period of the 10 million ton sugar harvest, billboards and walls throughout the island proclaimed, in bold letters, 'Women: The Revolution Within the Revolution!' and, 'The Revolution of Women is Greater than the Revolution Itself'. These posters were part of the massive effort, spearheaded by the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), to encourage women to enter the labour force.

There was and still is a labour shortage in Cuba. During the 1970 harvest it was abundantly clear that every available pair of hands was essential. Yet the purpose of the harvest was not simply to amass 10 million tons of sugar: none of the great mobilizations undertaken since the Revolution has had one goal alone. The purpose, on another level, was precisely to use the harvest to draw women out of the home into the work place. Here, some central assumptions of the Cuban revolutionary process become clear.

Cuba is still fighting its way out of underdevelopment. In the battle to create the material abundance on which communism must be based, its chief resource is its people. A woman, or any human being in Cuba, cannot feel fully a part of that society unless she is actively

*Cubans use the term 'labour force' to mean all those engaged in salaried work. Throughout this article, the term is employed in the same manner.

engaged, alongside her neighbours, in using her labour to achieve that abundance. She cannot feel completely integrated unless she is physically and mentally involved in the hard, daily, collective struggle to conquer underdevelopment.

Nor can she overcome a kind of personal underdevelopment if her life is bound by the four walls of her home, or even by the broader confines of her neighbourhood. The Cubans hold to a fundamental belief, emerging out of practice, that human beings can realize themselves only through work, creative and productive, only through using and developing the capacities which lie within them. Under socialism, Che wrote, work acquires 'a new condition'. It is through work, through 'a contribution to the life of the society in which he is reflected ... that man achieves total awareness of his social being, which is equivalent to his full realization as a human being ... '[1]

Women make up 49 per cent of the population in Cuba. The Revolution cannot succeed in creating material abundance and transforming human consciousness unless women are fully integrated into its effort to create new people, and a new society. Women must grow within the Revolution, or both the Cuban Revolution and Cuban women will suffer.

The barriers to this societal and individual realization have been formidable, and are not all in the past. They encompass not only the historical position of Cuban women prior to the Revolution, but also the material fact of underdevelopment and the persistence of attitudes deeply embedded in colonial and neo-colonial society, attitudes held by both men and women.

WORK AND EDUCATION IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY CUBA

The misery and deprivation which Cuban women suffered both within the work force and outside it prior to the Revolution were part of the larger misery suffered by the society as a whole. Throughout the country in 1958 over 600,000 people, or 28 per cent of the labour force, were unemployed or underemployed.[2] They formed a permanent shifting supply of labour for the large foreign-owned companies that dominated the island's economy.

According to the 1953 census, only one out of seven women worked outside her home. Those who did, acted out of necessity: the wives and daughters of the unemployed and underemployed, of working men and *campesinos*, worked when the survival of their families depended upon it, in whatever jobs they could get. Such jobs were extremely limited. Women in pre-revolutionary Cuba, as elsewhere in the capitalist world, filled the lowest ranks in the reserve labour army. Indeed, historically, women first entered the industrial

labour force only with the demise of slavery. As Cuban ethnologist Fernando Ortiz noted:

> It was at the end of the Ten Years' war that a woman went to work in a Havana factory for the first time; it was the cigarette factory La Africana ... From that time on women came to form a part of the factory proletariat. As slavery, which was abolished in 1880, was giving its last gasps, industrial greed, unable to depend on slave labor any longer, but unwilling to pay the salaries of free men, created the feminine proletariat, which is cheaper.[3]

In 1953, the major industrial sectors open to female employment were tobacco (where women constituted 35 per cent of the workers) and textiles (46 per cent).[4] Many women could only find jobs as domestic servants. The 1953 census records 70,000 female domestic workers. These women were paid somewhere between five and thirty pesos a month (a peso was equivalent to a dollar).

As a result of these wages, domestic work was often the prelude to prostitution. C. Wright Mills has reported the observation of one Cuban revolutionary that:

> Nobody knows how many of our sisters were whores in Cuba during the last years of the Batista tyranny. In Havana (in 1957) there were some 270 overcrowded brothels, there were dozens of hotels and motels renting rooms by the hour, and there were over 700 bars congested with *meseras* — or hostesses — the first step towards prostitution. There were about 12 *meseras* to each bar, and they each earned from the bar about $2.25 a day. The employers and the Government grafter each got about $52 a day out of it.[5]

Maintaining a reserve labour army required little educational input. And women, at the lowest rank of that army, required even less. The level of education provided for women ensured that they would not move out of their designated roles. The 1953 census records that more than one out of five women could neither read nor write: in rural areas, this figure jumped to two out of five. One-third of 10-year-old girls were not in school at the time of the census, and only one in 100 women over 25 had any university education.

Colonialism and neo-colonialism had equipped women to be uneducated servants in their own and others' homes. Women who rebelled against their fate helped, through the Revolution, to dismantle this structure of exploitation and oppression. But it was only with the destruction of the old economic and political order, beginning on a country-wide scale in 1959, that the possibility for concrete change in the position of all women began to emerge.

EDUCATION AFTER THE REVOLUTION

Women in Cuba entered the Revolution as persons who had been doubly exploited: as workers and as women. Ancient taboos which instructed them to remain at home considered the *calle*, or street, the man's province, and the *casa*, or home, the woman's place. Finally, there was the assumption that all work related to house and children had to be done by women.

During the first five years of the Revolution, from 1959 to 1963, much attention centred on overcoming the effects of their double exploitation. Efforts to raise their level of general knowledge, basic skills and political consciousness led to the development of programmes like the schools for domestic workers and for peasants.[6] Some 20,000 maids attended the special Schools for the Advancement of Domestic Servants established in Havana in 1960; many of these women went on to staff childcare centres. Others took night-school general education courses which included shorthand and typing, and full-time day courses preparing for specific tasks in administration or commerce.

The Ana Betancourt Schools for Peasant Girls brought thousands of women from remote areas of Cuba to live in Havana for a year to gain sewing skills and basic education. While there were indeed women trained during this period for jobs that were traditionally non-female, such as bus driving, in general women were channelled into areas and types of work historically associated with them. These efforts, however, cannot be dismissed out of hand. The Revolution was concentrating scarce resources and effort into altering as quickly as possible the lives of those women who were most exploited. Nor could it be expected, given existing prejudices concerning what it was 'proper' for a woman to do, that women or their families would have readily accepted radically different types of jobs. Nonetheless, the patterns of sexual division in the labour force were not fundamentally challenged in these early years.

By the mid 1960s the goal of providing women with basic education was nearly accomplished. The Ana Betancourt School was transformed in 1963 to a nine-grade unified school. The Schools for Domestic Servants were supplanted by educational programmes operated by the FMC on the basis of one's neighbourhood rather than one's pre-revolutionary occupation.

During this same period the old structures of discrimination in the entire educational system were being systematically torn down, offering access to training and knowledge for the first time to previously home-bound women. During the Literacy Campaign of 1961, which reduced the rate of illiteracy from 23 to 3.7 per cent, 56 per cent of those who learned to read and write were women. They were then encouraged to go on with their studies. By 1970 women

composed 49 per cent of Cuba's elementary school students, 55 per cent of high school students, and 40 per cent of students in higher education.[7]

BRINGING WOMEN INTO THE LABOUR FORCE

The creation in 1964 of a Secretary of Production in the FMC marked a shift in emphasis within this initial period of transition. As the means to provide disadvantaged women with basic education and/or new skills became increasingly widespread, systematic efforts were undertaken to incorporate women into the labour force. Although there was some slow but steady progress in this area throughout the 1960s, it was through the preparations for the 1970 harvest that a quantitative change took place.

During 1969/70 hundreds of thousands of women participated as volunteers in the countrywide mobilization. For some, this was their first experience in work outside the home. For others, this provided the bridge between working on a temporary basis and being incorporated into the labour force full-time. From 1969 revolutionary leaders planned to recruit some 100,000 women into the labour force each year.

At the beginning of the 1970s the assumption that lay behind this effort was made clear: eventually all women would be drawn out of their homes into socially productive work. The Vagrancy Law, which went into effect in March of 1971, articulated this:

> Article 1: All citizens who are physically and mentally fit have the social duty to work.
> Article 2: All men from 17 through 60 and all women from 17 through 55 are presumably physically and mentally fit to work.
> Article 3: All male citizens of working age who are fit to work and are not attending any of the schools in our national system of education but who are completely divorced from any work center are guilty of the crime of loafing.

The law stops short of making it a crime if women do not work, but its direction was clearly understood. *Granma* of 14 March 1971 reported that during the discussions of the law, one of the changes proposed, but not adopted, was 'that it be applied to single women who neither work nor study'. Some work centres recommended that the full weight of the law be applied to women.

By the early 1970s the female Cuban labour force could be characterized by several traits. First, it had grown enormously in number. In 1974 women comprised 25.3 per cent of the total work force, and some 26 per cent of all Cuban women were now involved in salaried work outside the home.[8] Secondly, women tended to be

concentrated in those areas of work which were historically theirs, being extensions of female functions within the home. In particular, education, health, administration and light industry absorbed the largest number of women workers.[9] There were, of course, exceptions, and a great deal of publicity was given to women who worked in jobs which were traditionally men's, such as cutting cane. Yet the sexual division of labour was reinforced on several levels. In certain areas, what had been necessity in the early days of the Revolution was now elevated to the level of theory. The fact that childcare, for example, had been staffed by women was given a 'scientific' justification: children needed female nurturing. It was 'only natural' that those who principally cared for children in day-care centres should be women.

In 1968 the sexual division of labour was sanctioned by law in the Ministry of Labour's Resolutions 47 and 48. These, in theory, respectively reserved some 500 job categories specifically for women, and prohibited women from entering an equal number of professions. The resolutions were justified by revolutionary leaders on several bases. Essentially, it was argued that they would counter prejudices against female labour by assuring women that certain areas of work would be open to them. Additionally, at the critical 10 million ton harvest time, they released men to do other, presumably more physically taxing, jobs in other areas of the economy. It was further asserted by some that in reassuring women that they would not be asked to do certain types of work, the resolutions helped facilitate at the psychological level their entry into the work force. Whatever the justification, one fundamental effect of Resolutions 47 and 48 was to strengthen notions of a 'natural' sexual division of labour.

Finally, although women were leaving their houses to work in greater and greater numbers, they were also leaving the labour force and returning home at an alarming rate. For example, during the last three months of 1969, 140,000 women were in employment. Some 110,000 of these women were still working at the end of 1969. However, this represented a net gain of only 27,000 for that period, since at the same time 80,000 other women had left work.[10] For the entire period from 1969 to 1974, it has been estimated that over 700,000 women had to be recruited into the labour force in order to achieve a net gain of just under 200,000 women workers.[11]

One reason for this high drop-out rate is that vestiges of the old *casa/calle* expectation still linger on. Fidel, at the Thirteenth Congress on Cuban Workers, held in November 1973, pointed out:

> It costs a lot to train a nurse! It costs a lot of money to train a teacher! All those years ... elementary school, high school ... And what a need we have for teachers! But if a young man made a good salary, and he married the teacher, he told her: 'Don't go to work,

we don't need the money ... ' And the country lost a good teacher. Lost a good nurse. Of course, when the country lost the teacher or the nurse it wasn't only for economic reasons, it's all the residual male chauvinism and supermanism and all those things that are still a part of us.

But as a more widespread phenomenon, the fluctuation in women's work patterns must be traced to the 'second shift' — housework. For example, in a plastic shoe factory near Havana, many women had stopped work; it was found that their main complaint was depression. Their husbands refused to help with the housework, and they were worried about the care their children were receiving.[12]

Some women have interpreted Fidel's assertion in 1966 that 'women in a social revolution should be doubly revolutionary' to mean that they should assume the dual role of worker and housekeeper; they proudly describe themselves as 'double revolutionaries'. Others have become discouraged or overcome by fatigue, and have left their jobs.

Clearly, despite the drive to increase the numbers of women in the work force, there had been no corresponding effort to get men into the kitchen. Although, over the years, the (largely male) revolutionary leaders had made occasional reference to the issue of domestic responsibilities, there was no real challenge to the assumption that laundry, cooking and care of children were exclusively women's work. To the extent that the state could take on and collectivize those responsibilities, women could be relieved of the 'thousand unimportant trivialities'.[13] But given the scarcity of resources, the full services to relieve women of household tasks could not be immediately provided.

THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP

The situation becomes even more obvious with an examination of leadership ranks both in the work place, and in the vanguard and mass organizations. If women have to pick up children from day-care centres, do the shopping or the laundry, cook dinner and take care of other household chores, it is difficult for them to do voluntary work, or stay extra hours in their work place to attend assemblies or betterment courses. Interim measures, such as the decision taken at the Thirteenth Congress of the Cuban Trade Union, to award all working mothers a labour of merit are no way to get to the heart of the problem. Women workers have had less chance to develop and display those attitudes and skills which might lead to their promotion to leadership positions. These difficulties are amply demonstrated by figures on

the number of women in prominent positions, even in the very sectors of the economy where women workers are concentrated. Table I reveals that in none of the nine major sectors in which women are employed does the percentage of female leaders come near matching the percentage of women working in that sector.

Table I: Distribution of female workers in the labor force

Bodies	*% of female labor force*	*% of female leadership*
Minsap (Ministry of Public Health)	64	31.5
Mined (Ministry of Education)	58	40.0
Cubatabaco	53	8.1
Minil (Ministry of Milk Processing Industries)	41	20.4
Init (National Tourism Institute)	41	15.7
MINCIN (Ministry of National Trade)	36	26.6
MINAL (Ministry of Food Industries)	18	5.8
INRA (National Institute of Agranar Reform)	9	1.9
Minaz (Ministry of Sugar)	7	3.3

Source: Memories: Second Congress of Cuban Women's Federation (Havana, Editorial Orbit, 1975).

Similarly, within industry there is consistent under-representation of women in leadership positions. In the Ministry of Light Industries, for example, women make up 77.6 per cent of the work force in the branches producing ready-made articles. Yet they comprise only 51.9 per cent of the leadership. In Graphic Arts, 24.6 per cent of the work force and only 7.9 per cent of the leadership is female.[14]

It is the Communist Party in Cuba which makes the fundamental decisions about the direction of the Revolution. The difficulties women have in entering and remaining in the work force, and in fully participating in their work centres, greatly inhibits their chances for becoming Party members, and therefore for participating in critical decision-making at the highest levels. The Party in Cuba represents, as the Cubans see it, the vanguard of the working class, the great majority of the population. Its members are those judged to have the highest degree of revolutionary *consciencia*. It is axiomatic for any Marxist that this vanguard must emerge from the working class itself, and it is in the work places that potential Party members are nominated. Clearly, if women only comprise 25.3 per cent of the work force, this puts immediate limitations on the possibility of female Party membership reflecting the total female population. And if women workers are burdened with the 'second shift', this makes it unlikely that Party membership figures will reflect even their

numerical strength within the work force. And indeed only 13.23 per cent of Party militants are women.[15]

When the leadership ranks of the vanguard organizations are examined, an even greater disproportion in the representation of women is evident (see Table II). In the Party, 2.9 per cent of the municipal national leadership is female. There are no women members in the political bureau, nor in the secretariat, the two bodies which carry on the daily work of the Party. Out of 112 Central Committee members, five are women. (Four of the twelve alternate members selected are women.)

Table II Percentage of female leaders in the Party, the UJC and the mass organizations

Level[a]	*PCCB*[b] %	*UJC*[c] %	*CTC*[d] %	*CDR*[e] %	*ANAP*[f] %
municipal	2.9	22	24	7	16.38
regional	4.1	7	21	7	0.76
provincial	6.3	7	15	3	1.19
national	5.5	10	7	19	2.04

a These figures were compiled before the new administrative reorganization, which eliminates the regional level, rationalizes the size of the municipalities and expands the number of provinces from 6 to 14, went into effect.
b PCC (Cuban Communist Party) 13.23 per cent women
c UJC (Communist Youth Organization) 29 per cent women
d CTC (Confederation of Cuban Workers) 25.3 per cent women
e CDR (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution) 50 per cent women
f ANAP (National Association of Small Farmers) not available

It might be supposed that the underrepresentation of women, both as members and as leaders, would be less in the Young Communists' League (the UJC), since most recruits were born into the Revolution rather than growing up within the structures of the past. It is indeed less, but the League is still dominated by men: 29 per cent of UJC members are women; they comprise 22 per cent of the municipal and 10 per cent of the national leadership. In the mass organizations the situation is much the same. Even in the neighbourhood organizations, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs), which are formed from those who live in a delimited area, the fact that 50 per cent of the members are women has not changed the fact that they comprise only 7 per cent of the municipal CDR leadership and 19 per cent at the national level.

Problems of promotion to leadership positions are evident even within the FMC itself, although its membership is exclusively female. When promotion involves a change of residence, a whole series of difficulties have arisen (at least in the case of married women) which have, according to Party sources, proved 'truly unsolvable'. These

problems centre around the inability of husband, or family, or husband's work centre, to take this work seriously.

In order to explore the reasons for this high under-representation of women among the leaders of every important organization, a survey was taken, under the auspices of the CTC, in 211 work centres throughout the country. In all, 5,168 workers, both men and women, were asked to cite the major factors inhibiting greater female participation.[16] Some 85.7 per cent answered that one of the chief obstacles was the women's domestic obligations. (It is interesting to note that 51.5 per cent saw the 'low cultural level' of women as a factor. Yet, according to calculations made for the Party Congress, women workers in Cuba have achieved, on the average, a higher educational level than men.)[17]

It follows, then, that when it came to nominating and electing candidates to the newly-organized governmental structures, women would be underrepresented. These structures were set up first in one province, Matanzas, in 1974. The percentage of women nominated in meetings of neighbours was 7.6 per cent. The total percentage of women elected was 3 per cent. When women in Matanzas were asked whether they would have been willing to serve if they had been elected, some 54.3 per cent said no. The reasons given by the majority were 'domestic tasks and care of children and husband'.

SERVICES FOR WORKING WOMEN

This is not to say that the Revolution has ignored these problems. Organizations have emerged since 1969 whose purpose is to confront the problem of retaining women in the work place, and to ease both the objective and the subjective tensions associated with the shift from *casa* to *calle*. In 1969, the Feminine Front was incorporated into the trade union structure. At the end of that year 'Rescue Commissions' in various work places were set up through the joint effort of the CTC, the Ministry of Work and the FMC. These commissions have the responsibility for providing help, both material and psychological, to women whose educational level means that they have been assigned low positions in their work places. In November of 1970 the Incorporation and Permanence Commission was established, composed of representatives from the Party, the Ministry of Work, the CTC, and the FMC. Its activities are aimed, as well, at achieving permanency among women in the labour force.

Moreover, the number and variety of facilities serving the families of working women have steadily increased. By 1974 there were 642 day-care centres, caring for more than 55,000 children. The economic plan for 1976-80 contains provisions for the construction of some 400 more day-care centres, which will allow for a total capacity

of 150,000 children. Even this will not meet the level of need. Places in day-care centres are allotted solely to the children of working women. In 1973 only 16 per cent of these children could be accommodated, and there was a waiting list of 19,000. The majority of women who work and whose children do not yet have access to day care make use of various modified extended family-type structures. Grandmothers, other women relatives or close friends — that is, other women — who do not work care for their children. In some of those rural areas where day-care centres are not readily available, women themselves have organized 'guerrilla day care'. Groups of women have either rotated the responsibility for caring for children or assigned one among them to do this, so that the rest would be free to participate in agricultural labour.

The *Plan Jaba*, or Shopping Bag Plan, grants any member of the family of a working women — in practice generally the woman herself — priority service at her local grocery store. It was organized and is run by FMC members, that is, by women. It is constantly subject to revisions. Every two or three months, CDRs hold community control meetings to criticize and suggest changes in public services, including the *Plan Jaba*.

Increasing numbers of work places are offering laundry services to their workers. This involves more than machines and soapsuds, requiring the construction of buildings, the provision of transport trucks and the employment of laundry workers. Although the service is improving, smooth operations are still difficult, especially outside Havana. In Santiago, for example, the time from delivery to return ranges from five to fifteen days, largely due to shortages of vehicles for transport. In a society where no one has a closet full of clothes, a laundry service that takes this long does not eliminate laundry from housework, and therefore from women's chores.

Working women are offered preferential access to a variety of other goods and services. Special days solely for working women are part of the regular *libreta*, or ration book, schedule. These are days when new selections of goods go on sale; so working women receive first choice. Often one passes by store windows containing goods marked, 'these articles only for sale to working women'. Stores are open throughout the day and evening, so women can shop outside working hours.

More and more refrigerators, pressure cookers and small appliances that aid housework are being distributed through the unions in work places. Working women also receive preferential access to dry cleaners, shoe stores, tailors, hairdressers and medical appointments, thereby further reducing the amount of time they must spend waiting in line.

Efforts have also been made to facilitate access to work. Where women are tied to daily tasks at home, the greater the distance which

they must travel to a work place, the greater the obstacle to working. New housing projects have constructed, or have plans to construct, easily accessible work centres predominantly for women. A plastic shoe factory staffed by 400 workers, 245 of whom are women, has been built next to the Jose Marti District in Santiago, where 85 per cent of the 245 women workers live. A textile factory to be operated primarily by women is being constructed at the new city of Alamar.

Several considerations emerge clearly from an examination of these efforts. First, there is no question that the Revolution is committed to providing, as quickly as possible, the facilities to relieve much of the individualized burden of house work. But the necessary material resources have been extremely limited. For example, at the beginning of the 1970s, the Cubans launched major campaigns to construct new houses and schools. The results are already impressive. By 1974 housing for 13,000 people at the new city of Alamar had been built, and 150 schools in the countryside were in operation. But these projects draw heavily on resources such as cement or heavy equipment, the same resources necessary to build day-care centres, or laundries. The housing shortage is severe: schools in the countryside provide the setting for a more revolutionary socialization of the next generation. How can one say that more day-care centres, or better laundry services, should have higher priority?

Moreover, while the collectivization of household tasks in the public sector is necessary and potentially liberating, as long as it is women who continue to bear the burden of the remaining chores, the fact that if they work they may now go to the head of the grocery line hardly solves the problem. While the notion holds strong that this is work from which the state is freeing *women* rather than *people*, those tasks that remain uncollectivized inevitably weigh on women. Further, if these old ideas about women's responsibility are not rooted out and destroyed, the people who take over those household chores which the state has assumed will inevitably be women. In this way, collectivization of tasks reinforces rather than destroys a sexual division of labour.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE 'SECOND SHIFT'

It is within this context that the recent series of events regarding the position of women take on particular significance. They indicate that the revolutionary leadership has made a qualitative leap, and, for the first time, has begun a systematic national campaign at the grass roots level against some of the most fundamental aspects of the patriarchal heritage.

The first major event concerned Resolutions 47 and 48. At the 1973 Thirteenth Congress of the Cuban Trade Union organization it was

stated that neither women nor men should be kept from doing any sort of work required by the Revolution (within the limits of considerations of health) and that the resolutions should be 'reconsidered'. This position was re-emphasized at the National Congress of the Women's Federation (the FMC), which was held in December of the following year. The FMC called for a study of Resolution 48, which prohibited woman from occupying certain jobs:

> We consider that the concept 'prohibition' implies discrimination both for men and for women; thus we propose, in the case of such jobs, that the conditions and risks entailed be explained to the woman and that the decision be hers as to whether or not she will occupy the job.[18]

The main effort, however, has centred upon the 'second shift'. It is in this framework that the Family Code passed in 1974 must be examined. The Family Code states unequivocally that in homes where both partners work, both must share equally in household tasks and the raising of children. It thereby gives the force of law to the notion of shared responsibility.

But the Code has wider significance. In Cuba every proposed law is first discussed and modified in meetings of the mass organizations, both in the work place and in the neighbourhood. In the case of the Family Code, according to various accounts, these discussions were interesting for what was not said, as well as what was expressed. No man stood up to object to the parts of the Code which stipulate equal responsibility in the home. This, of course, does not mean that all Cuban men agreed. But they recognized publicly the social justice of the provisions, even if in their private lives they had no intention of abiding by them.

The Family Code became law on International Women's Day, 1975. A reading of those sections which deal with equal responsibility in the household and with regard to children is now standard procedure at marriage ceremonies.

At the same time that discussions concerning the Family Code were going on, women throughout Cuba were organizing at the grass roots level for the 1974 FMC Congress, mentioned above. This organizing effort involved innumerable discussions of issues related to women in the labour force. Out of these came a number of suggestions for improving the services which the state has assumed but which do not, in themselves, challenge the notion of the 'second shift'. Resolutions called for:

- increasing the participation of women workers in qualification and requalification courses, by setting up classes during working hours without detriment to salary.
- broadening and improving laundry and dry cleaning facilities.

—broadening the system of sales to women and studying the opening and closing hours of commercial stores.

—increasing the number of factories which produce made-to-order clothes.

—developing plans for the production of prepared and semi-prepared food.

—implementing 4 and 6 hour shifts and other special work schedules where economic considerations allow.[19]

At a more fundamental level, the FMC Congress firmly reasserted the call for an end to the 'second shift'. 'It is a job for the entire society to solve or to share the problems and difficulties which obstruct the total incorporation of women ... ' Its resolutions included proposals for joint action with the trade unions and the other mass organizations in order to fight what were phrased as 'comfortable attitudes' with respect to the distribution of domestic chores in the home.[20]

By far the strongest statement that the revolution *must* achieve *full* equality between men and women emerged from the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, which was held in December of 1975. The document dealing with women states that, 'in practice, the full equality of women does not yet exist', that 'a fundamental battle must be waged in the realm of consciousness, because it is there that the backward concepts which lock us in the past continue to subsist'.[21]

The resolutions at the Party Congress reassert and elaborate on those issued at the FMC Congress the previous year. Thus they deal again with expanding the services provided by the state to ease household chores and child care. But, as well, the Party firmly recognizes the refusal of men to participate fully in the execution of these chores as a major manifestation of backward concepts. It asserts, in forceful language, that 'it is a revolutionary duty, in the unescapable present, to achieve an equitable distribution of unavoidable household chores'.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

What conclusions can we draw about the present position of women workers in Cuba? Some are clear, and apply generally to all women in Cuba. The most fundamental point to be stressed is the enormous contrast between woman's fate in pre-revolutionary Cuba, and her possibilities after 1959. Without question, the major structures that guaranteed the oppression and the exploitation of women have been destroyed. This is manifested in all sorts of ways; its visual image is

reflected in schoolrooms, work centres, meetings and in the streets. The fact that the number of divorces in Cuba rose from 2,500 in 1958 to 25,000 in 1970[22] indicates one major change: women are no longer locked into the prison of an oppressive marriage by economic necessity.

But contradictions still exist. The revolution, after all, is less than 20 years old. These contradictions characterize the society as a whole as well as each man and woman in it.

The national attack on sexism, as it is related to women's ability to work, really began only in the past few years. Far too little time has elapsed for anything more than a tentative assessment. There are, however, various indications of directions and problems. Humour is often an excellent index of the effectiveness of a given measure, and since 1974 many funny stories, often defensive, have made the rounds in Cuba. One tells of a male Party member who agreed, after much resistance, to share part of the housework. He agreed to do the laundry, on condition that his wife would hang it up outside — so his neighbours might never know!

On another level, members of the most recent (1977) Venceremos Brigade reported that women are approaching their mass organizations, in particular the FMC and the CTC, to put pressure on their husbands to abide by the Family Code's decree of equal responsibility in the house. There are, however, no accounts of women taking their husbands to court, an action which theoretically became possible with the enactment of the Family Code as law.

A survey of the total number of hours women worked was conducted among 251 women workers in April of 1975 — one month after the Family Code became law. As reported at the Party Congress, it was found that women worked in their work centres and in their homes for a daily average of 13 hours, Monday to Friday, and 11½ hours at weekends, 'owing to the accumulation of domestic tasks'.[23] Clearly, the problem has not disappeared.

The Cubans still assert a 'scientific' biological difference between men and women, reasoning which historically has been cause and/or justification for the sexual division of labour. Fidel Castro, in his speech to the closing of the FMC Congress, explained why it was that women should be treated with what he called 'proletarian courtesy':

> It is true with women, and must be so with women because they are physically weaker and because they have tasks and functions and human responsibilities that the man does not have.[24]

The general acceptance in Cuba of this biological determinism continues to be reflected within the work force. Its most recent, and most controversial expression, comes in Resolution 40, issued by the Ministry of Labour (MINTRAB) in June 1976, at the conclusion of its study of Resolutions 47 and 48. This still restricts women from taking

some 300 types of jobs, despite the FMC's call for free choice. The justification for this is given in terms of health, and for some of the prohibited jobs there is scientific evidence of potential danger to women. Work with lead, for example, has been shown to endanger the health of a foetus in the earliest stages of pregnancy. Others, however, reflect old prejudices of women's 'frailty'. General categories of prohibited occupations include work under water and at heights of more than five stories.[25] The reason given at work place after work place (we visited about fifteen centres in June and July 1974), when we asked why women did not work on this or that machine, or in this or that area of the factory, was 'considerations of health'. It can be assumed that, as with Resolutions 47 and 48, there will be exceptions to the rule. But the fact remains that Resolution 40 gives the force of law to a systematized sexual division of labour.

There have been a few attempts to explain these restrictions. Marifeli Perez Stable, in her article 'Toward the Emancipation of Cuban Women', suggests that they are related to economic and governmental reorganization.

> It may well be that the economic rationale behind the 1976 resolution is to free jobs occupied or which could be occupied by women so that men who have been rationalized out of their jobs can once again be employed. Women without jobs after all, do not present the same type of social problems as men without jobs.[26]

That such contradictions exist should not be surprising. The roots of patriarchy are deep, the problems of underdevelopment severe and the transition to socialism has been going on only twenty years in Cuba. At the same time, the degree to which the Cubans resolve these contradictions will be the measure of their success in achieving a truly liberated, truly equal society.

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JAN VALDELIN

Ethiopia 1974-7: from anti-feudal revolution to consolidation of the bourgeois state

While the radicalized petty-bourgeois regime of Ethiopia has proclaimed major reforms benefiting large segments of the population it has not broken its ties with imperialism. The repression of the military dictatorship is directed against peasants, workers, students and intellectuals as well as the feudal forces.

Since a communist party never existed in Ethiopia the military's claim for socialism is utterly utopian. In the absence of a mass party, of protracted mass struggle and of the ideological training of peasants and workers, the regime believes that, with the help of intellectual advisors, it is implementing revolution — in the name of 'scientific socialism'.

Imperial Ethiopia was an explosive conjuncture of the unresolved contradictions of class, ethnicity and religion. The sudden outbreak of all those contradictions in a revolutionary process has created a chaos of class struggle and regional disintegration. The difficulties of the regime to rule have forced it increasingly to use violence as means of political persuasion. That violence is not being exercised by a disciplined and well-trained people's army under the leadership of a revolutionary party, but partly by the army created by the Emperor and partly by undisciplined, ideologically backward and militarily untrained 'militia' — groups recruited among peasants and the lumpen proletariat.*

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*Although widely used by Ethiopian leftist circles the expression 'lumpen proletariat' does not adequately denote those groups actually referred to. Throughout this text 'lumpen proletariat' refers to the dispossessed unemployed masses in the urban areas.

Race & Class, XIX, 4 (1978).

The regime has now played out its role as an instrument for the transition from feudalism to bourgeois dictatorship; its continued rule in the name of socialism and marxism serves only to discredit socialism in the eyes of the Ethiopian peoples.

THE FEBRUARY MOVEMENT

February 1974 saw the beginning of a revolutionary process in Ethiopia which is still unfolding today. What later came to be called the 'February movement' began with a mutiny in the armed forces: the rank and file united against their officers and the military establishment to demand better pay and conditions of service. The initial revolt quickly spread through the country to army units in Asmara and Harrar, to military units in Addis Ababa, and to the air force and paratroop units and even to the navy. In many towns demonstrations against the regime were held openly and popular agitations for change became militant and generalized during February and March 1974. The wave of civil opposition soon led to diverse stoppages of work: a taxi strike in Addis Ababa, a widespread strike among teachers and, more important, the country's first general strike involving about 80,000 workers all occurred in March 1974.

While the underlying causes of the February upsurge can be traced to deeper contradictions that have existed for a considerable time, the immediate factors that sparked the February movement were the rapid deterioration in living conditions among the majority in the rural areas as well as among the minority town and city dwellers. By 1973 it had become well known that the rural areas in the north had suffered the worst famine in living memory and in the cities rapid inflation had become a cause of deep discontent among soldiers, the petty bourgeoisie, the working class (a relatively small group) and the many unemployed. The steep increase in oil prices, for example, triggered the taxi strike mentioned above. The gradual awareness of the famine and the government's attempts to conceal it compelled a growing number of intellectuals and lower-echelon civil servants to engage in strong criticism of and opposition to the policies of the regime. The teachers' trade union, for example, effectively blocked a proposal for changes in the educational system. Demonstrations in the main centres of population were joined not only by teachers and students but also by members of the petty bourgeoisie, the working class, the urban unemployed, impoverished priests and oppressed Muslims.

The February upsurge was to a great extent spontaneous and many rebellious activities and demonstrations were inspired, or temporarily or locally led, by activisits in the student movement. But the movement never found a consistent organizational form and this

proved to be its decisive weakness. The Emperor's regime gave rise to widespread discontent in all quarters, but to no commonly-held ideology or a political party of any significance.

The strength of the movement was its democratic and popular character. The circulation of leaflets and political tracts reached unprecedented proportions. Demonstrations, strikes, meetings and other actions were carried out frequently and spontaneously by groups representing the most diverse shades of opinion. The demands were not restricted to economic issues alone; they included demands for political democracy as well as the student movement's traditional call for 'Land to the Tiller'. In this manner the February movement assumed an anti-feudal, democratic and progressive stance challenging the rule of the imperial state itself. And despite the many diverse demands the opposition was united on the need for a change in power.

THE FALL OF THE IMPERIAL STATE

The February movement threatened the Ethiopian state in that it demanded reforms which would lead to the destruction of imperial power. The demands for land reform and political democracy were both incompatible with the continuing exercise of power by the ruling classes of the time. For the state was nothing more than the political arm of the traditional landowning class and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie that had aligned itself with it. The former had its social base in the ownership of the land and the extraction of feudal tributes from the peasants. It thus upheld 'traditional' values whereas the bourgeoisie represented the more modern industrial, administrative and educational institutions. This faction came into being after the Second World War and it grew rapidly with the expansion of the Ethiopian state apparatus in the 1960s. Its ranks swelled due to the large investments in state-owned companies, whose returns often found their way into the pockets of the same government officials. State power was also bolstered by the alliance the imperial state forged with the forces of imperialism — the US, Israel, West Germany.

Although the two factions of the ruling class overlapped and had strong ties of kinship, there were nevertheless economic and ideological conflicts between them. The bourgeoisie saw in the aristocracy's conservative view of society an obstacle to economic development. The feudal landowning and production relations were no longer only a burden to the peasants and an obstacle to greater agricultural production; they had also become an obvious hindrance to capitalist expansion in agriculture and industry. Even the World

Bank, in 1974, felt that land reform was essential to the breaking down of feudal structures.

This conflict between the two factions within the ruling class corresponds to the friction between the feudal mode of production and encroaching capitalist relations. During the 1960s, as capitalism expanded, the breach between the two grew wider and the bourgeoisie began to challenge the dominance of the aristocracy. The landowners had begun to adopt a life of luxury in the towns, and thus began to lose their grip on the rural population — which later proved to be fatal to the continuance of feudal power. While this rift represented the weakening of imperial power, it also indicated the possibility of a transition to a bourgeois-dominated state, that would have been in line with the interests of the allied imperialist states.

The bourgeoisie was taken by surprise by the February upsurge. It was neither sufficiently organized nor ideologically prepared, and it had no plan worked out for taking over from the Emperor by means of bourgeois reforms. The attacks of the February movement on feudalism and the imperial state did not therefore provide an opportunity for the bourgeoisie to seize power. It could not act in concert nor could it react quickly and with its customary brutality, it was paralysed by the attacks. At the same time the Emperor's most important instrument for controlling regional rebellions, strikes and demonstrations, in short, his instrument of repression — the armed forces — was no longer under his control.

The popular movement had no strategy for assuming power; nor did it have any real chance of exercising it. The upsurge took everyone by surprise, including the left groups and organizations. However, the exercise of democratic rights and the spread of democracy and freedom of speech even to the government's own organs, though limited in time, was a historic step forward.

After the government reshuffle in March 1974 there followed a period during which the Emperor's government under Prime Minister Endalkachew Mekonnen was forced to promise reforms in an attempt to assuage the people's demands. It was an indication that the mass movement had become too strong to be crushed. This period lasted roughly from March to July, when yet another government took over (under Mikael Imru) and the military began its first steps towards the seizure of power under the pretext of restoring 'order' in the country.

This was a period of decisive importance; it soon became apparent that Endalkachew had failed to unite the ruling class. For while ideologically he represented the bourgeoisie, his aristocratic origins prevented him from mobilizing sufficient support among them. The left, on the other hand, demanded changes that went beyond the bounds of bourgeois democracy, and this caused a split in the ranks of the opposition. It could be argued that this ultra-militant stand prevented the emergence of some sort of democratic framework; but

it should be noted that there was strong pressure from the impatient elements of the February movement. There is no doubt that a period of democracy would have greatly enhanced the emergence of a strong movement, but the organizational and ideological weakness of the February rebellions precluded such a development.

POWER FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF THE MILITARY

When the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee (AFCC) first began to function in the spring of 1974, its demands were solely economic. AFCC, which had been formed by army officers in Addis Ababa, wanted to lead the struggle for higher wages and better conditions for the soldiers. But some progressive members of the armed forces, particularly in the air force, had close contact with the student movement. Thus when the left accused the AFCC of failing to make political demands, the military was ready to listen. At that time the left was still united in the belief that it would be possible to make use of the military in the struggle for progressive change. This was one of the reasons why the AFCC believed itself to be in favour with the left, while still remaining loyal to the Emperor.

Because of continued popular pressure, the AFCC began to act independently of the government and more in line with popular demands. Public officials and members of the military who were accused of corruption were arrested by the AFCC and, without any apparent preconceived plan, it began to assume increasing responsibility for developments in the country. As its responsibility and power increased, the growing popular movement became a problem to the AFCC too. Thus, when tenants began to chase landowners, and the masses in the rural areas became gripped by the revolutionary fervour of the times, it became clear that the government could no longer curb this revolutionary development and that it had lost control of the situation. The AFCC therefore found itself in a position where it alone could assume the old rulers' responsibility for maintaining law and order. The crisis was growing out of all proportion and a vacuum had been created between the divided ruling class and the unorganized opposition. The military were drawn into this vacuum: power literally fell into their hands.

The military council which overthrew the Emperor in September 1974 was formed by the AFCC under considerable popular pressure from the February movement. Military units appointed representatives to a national military council (*Dergue* in Amharic), which in this way had links with the movement among the soldiers. About 120 military officers of the rank of major or below constituted the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC). Formally established on the deposition of the Emperor, the Council declared itself the new head

of state and government. The overthrow was enforced by the February movement. Whereas the popular upsurge was thus a prerequisite for creating the situation in which the military were compelled to take over, it cannot be claimed that the Dergue grew out of the non-military branches of the popular movement. The actual assumption of power took place over the heads of the people, a fact that did not prevent the Dergue later on from claiming to be the representatives of the February movement.

The low-ranking officers dominating the Dergue socially and economically belonged to a petty-bourgeois stratum. But many of them were still ideologically close to the peasantry on a very immature level and the Dergue was not based politically on either the petty bourgeoisie or any other class. In September 1974 it was an open question whether the Dergue would be able to initiate the political development from which a class base for a new state power could emerge. The Dergue did not itself represent a new state power.

The assumption of power was followed immediately by the institution of a new penal code according to which demonstrations, strikes, leaflets, newspapers and other manifestations of opinion were forbidden. The new penal code was directed and applied against the very democratic rights which the February movement had created. The military takeover signalled the end of the short period of democratic influence on Ethiopian politics, which had arisen when the ruling class was no longer capable of ruling.

THE LEFT GROUPS

Since about 1970 the student movement had been split into different branches. The general ideological struggle (related to the student revolt of the late 1960s), together with the creation of another branch of resistance in Eritrea (the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, EPLF), had led to an ideological rift. Hence after the military takeover the radical opposition could not agree about what ought to be done next.

The two groups which were later to play the most prominent role were united, to begin with, in calling for a civilian government to replace the military. Both these groups had emerged from the student movement and they represented the two main branches of the split. The group issuing the paper *Voice of the People* (later known as the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement, AESM) continued until the summer of 1974 to demand a civilian government, as did the group behind the paper *Demokrasia* (later known as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, EPRP). The EPRP's major political demand has since remained its call for 'Provisional People's Government'. As well as the EPRP and the AESM, large sections of the 'independent'

student movement and some small groups also counted as a part of the left.*

While the *Voice of the People* definitely called for a civilian government during the spring of 1974, some hesitation became noticeable during the summer. Sometimes the paper criticized the military leaders for their abuse of power and dictatorial methods, at other times it expressed 'critical support' for the Military Council — or for what it called the 'progressive elements' in the council. *Demokrasia* never wavered on this point. It continued to call for a 'Provisional People's Government' and for democratic rights, while repudiating the Dergue. A process of polarization between these two lines began and later proved an obstacle to revolutionary action. On the one hand, total condemnation of the Dergue left no possibility of exploiting the situation in favour of a broad-based anti-feudal struggle. On the other hand, 'critical support' for the Dergue could only have been a possible line of action for a limited period, had the emphasis been on 'critical'. But the *Voice of the People* spread illusions about the progressive politics of the military by giving up its demands one by one.

Because of this polarization of the left organized popular action lagged behind. Instead of working to mobilize the masses for democratic rights, the EPRP and the AESM concentrated on the question of state power. Their attitude to the masses descended into sectarian attempts to win support for their own lines. And at the same time the polarization was pushing these lines towards the extremes of either complete repudiation or full support for the council; other positions, which could have made for an independent revolutionary stance, were abandoned. Revolutionary progress after 1974 would have required independence from the military state and firm opposition to the right. From this point of view the takeover of power by the military meant an immediate weakening of the radical movement.

'ETHIOPIAN SOCIALISM'

The Dergue did not have any political programme of its own. The period from September to December 1974 illustrated in several ways the irresolution of the military for want of ideology and leadership. As we have already seen the Dergue lacked any definite social base

*It should be noted here that since the Amhara conquests, leading to the formation of present-day Ethiopia, there had been different national interests in conflict with the central power in Addis Ababa. Of these in 1974 only the ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front) and EPLF were of importance to the future of the Dergue. Both these movements were carrying out armed struggle for an independent Eritrea. EPLF was formed in 1970 as a splinter group from ELF, which had taken to arms at the beginning of the 1960s. The national question played a major part in the fragmentation of the left.

when it took power. Nor, obviously, had the Dergue any idea how to create a class base. Lacking a political stance the Dergue was pushed by circumstance into different directions.

However, one thing was clear to the military: the greatest organized threat to the Dergue was the rightist forces. The landowning class was still economically, socially and ideologically strong and politically organized. The military had to smash the conservative forces, thereby gaining more support from other groups.

This initial situation was reinforced in November 1974. About sixty people, mainly representatives of the old regime, were executed without trial. Some progressive students and Dergue officers, as well as General Aman Andom, the first chairman of the military council, were also put to death. With the execution of the aristocrats the Dergue was effectively ruling for the first time. From that moment on the fight against the reactionary forces became a matter of life or death: from November 1974 the Dergue's major 'political line' was to ensure its own survival. This provided the basis for the fragile unity that was created within the Dergue and became one of the factors behind the struggle against the country's feudal social relations and power structure.

Because of changes in the relations of force and the total inability of the military to control developments, the leaders veered from one position to another. By seeking support, sometimes from the right and sometimes from the left, in a variety of alliances, they managed in the end to make themselves unacceptable to almost all classes and strata. Obviously in this kind of political situation there could be no consistent attack on prevailing social conditions. What we have seen instead, after an initial period of fairly definite anti-feudal reforms, has been a series of swings from leftish utopian proclamations to reactionary and repressive action.

In December 1974 the Dergue's planned 'National Campaign for Development through Cooperation' aimed at the rural areas was rejected by the students. Many felt, rightly, that the campaign was intended to get the political opposition out of the towns, particularly out of Addis Ababa. The Dergue then launched a new slogan in addition to AFCC's spring slogan *'Ethiopia Tikdem'* (Ethiopia first) by calling for 'Ethiopian socialism'. The declaration on 'Ethiopian socialism' was vaguely formulated and resembled more than anything else a call for national revival. However, it set off the students' move into the rural areas — the campaigners had by that time been threatened that if they did not take part they would be debarred from their schools and work-places.

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Ethiopia of the 1970s is politically and economically a transitional

society, and since in transitional societies the political level plays a larger role than in stable social formations dominated by a given mode of production, the Ethiopian state after the deposition of the Emperor had, as we have seen, relative autonomy from the classes and the economy. This made it possible for the new regime to advance far in a programme of radicalization. After decades of feudal state rule, the new government was able to declare radical bourgeois reforms.

During the period from December 1974 until July 1975 the Dergue decided on three far-reaching reforms, together representing a fully-fledged attack against the economic base of feudalism. First, by the end of 1974, came the state takeover of large parts of the modern sector of the economy. This was followed by statification of all rural land. Finally, it was decided in July 1975 to statify all urban lands. The most important results of the reforms were, on the one hand, the economic ruin of the landowning class and, on the other, the abolition of the tenancy system leading to improved material conditions for the peasants. Both the rural and urban land reform made provision for the formation of mass organizations. Peasant associations were to implement rural reform while the urban dwellers' associations were to take over the functions of erstwhile house owners. Thus, in 1975 the military had created the potential for three mass organizations, including the already existing trade union movement. And in the course of this year the main class struggles related to the direct implementation of the reforms took place. By the end of the year the peasants had defeated the landlords, but the Dergue had also crushed all independent peasant associations as well as the trade unions (see below). The military had by then established its own order in the mass organizations: many peasant associations had become tools of the state, all former trade unions were banned and the urban dwellers associations were on the way to becoming instruments of state repression. Whereas the decision to undertake the reforms was a progressive measure, the implementation proved the military to be incapable of relying on the peasant masses or the workers. Instead it moved to clamp down on all independent peasant or worker activity.

FURTHER POLARIZATION OF THE LEFT

The Dergue's attempt to carry out a military offensive in Eritrea had already met with sharp criticism from the EPRP. The EPRP saw little chance of supporting the Dergue and the attack on Eritrea around New Year 1975 reduced these chances even more. The EPRP stuck to its line of supporting the Eritrean struggle for independence. The AESM, however, began to waver in its criticism of the Dergue during

the summer of 1974 and abandoned its support of the Eritreans. Its justification was that there was no longer any need to demand independence now that the Dergue was in power. At the time of the Dergue's offensive the AESM claimed that the military regime was 'patriotic, revolutionary and democratic'. When the Dergue announced its land reform, this was the signal for the AESM to declare itself willing to cooperate with the military council. The leaders of AESM were thus continuing along the lines they had followed for many years: to support without scruple anything which might mean a chance for their own movement to increase its power. At the same time the AESM was geared to driving out its main opponent on the left, the EPRP.

The EPRP's situation compared favourably with that of the AESM in that the EPRP enjoyed considerable support among students and white-collar workers. The EPRP also saw the land reform as a progressive measure — but insisted that it was a basic right of the peasantry: it did not have to thank the Dergue for its own land. Such an approach would possibly have made 'Land to the Tiller' a line that could have continued to unite the left. But when the AESM chose to support the Dergue, land reform became instead a divisive factor.

Because of its involvement with the campaign students the EPRP had become directly involved in the struggle between landowners and peasants. Campaign participants sympathizing with the EPRP tried to mobilize the peasants in support of certain political demands, in particular people's government. When the government initiated repressive measures against these students, the EPRP was forced to criticize the Dergue with increasing severity. Soon, according to EPRP propaganda, the Dergue was nothing short of fascist. The AESM was attacked by the EPRP for its indirect support of the Dergue, while the AESM implied that the EPRP had made a mistake by disassociating itself from the Dergue for being fascist.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND THE SEPTEMBER 1975 EVENTS

During 1974 the central trade union organization (the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions, CELU) which had been created at the beginning of the 1960s, had demanded the establishment of a 'Provisional People's Government'. During 1975 the CELU and its member unions continued to call for democratic rights, people's government and those economic improvements which had been demanded by the February movement. Thus the trade unions were a source of constant worry to the military government and a thorn in the flesh of the AESM, which lacked roots in the labour movement and which was by then on the way to joining the supporters of the military. Numerically the working class is not particularly strong in

Ethiopia, but because of the highly-centralized nature of political life there, it does have some importance.

In September 1975 the military arranged nationwide celebrations of the first anniversary of the fall of the Emperor. While the AESM was busy uniting itself with the Dergue, the EPRP prepared a major protest against the government with the participation of students and union workers. Rising prices, stagnant wages and the lack of any improvements in workers' conditions after the state takeover of industry were all causes of discontent. The students too had suffered severe set-backs in the rural areas. As the anniversary drew near CELU called a clandestine congress and the students began to pour into the towns.

The students' demonstration on 12 September was a fiasco. Those who had avoided capture along the roads into the towns were too few and too badly organized to be able to disrupt the meetings of the military council. CELU's congress passed a resolution demanding various reforms if the Dergue wished to avoid a general strike. The demands included democratic rights, the right to strike and price controls as well as the demand that CELU leaders arrested in 1974 should be set free.

On 25 September the military struck. A union meeting, where the CELU resolution was being discussed, turned into a bloodbath when the delegates tried to prevent the arrest of their chairman. Seven delegates were shot dead and several others were wounded. This provocation gave rise to uncertainty among the organized workers. Many of them went on strike immediately and spontaneously, while others waited to see what would happen. There were thus extensive strikes, but nothing that could be said to resemble a general strike. The movement was divided and could not oppose the violence of the military in any coordinated way. With the help of informers, the military were able to take action against every workplace where there had been a strike. In many places the workers were shot down at work. There were cases of the 'guilty' being maltreated in front of the whole workforce until they confessed to their 'crimes'.

On 30 September a state of emergency was proclaimed. Not one union leader was able to avoid the reprisals, which took the form of death or imprisonment and torture. In the events of September 1975 the Dergue had shown itself to the working class in its true colours.

THE ADVENTURISM OF EPRP AND THE OPPORTUNISM OF AESM

In 1975, by overestimating their own ability to offer an alternative state power and to mobilize the masses, the EPRP made the mistake of tempting defenceless students and workers to face the armed attacks of the military. The lesson was that militancy and justified

demands cannot compensate for a weak organization, a lack of political training of cadres, and ideological immaturity. The EPRP was unable to defend either the students who had demonstrated against the military or the strikers who had wanted to demonstrate their solidarity with militant comrades. Part of the political responsibility for the massacre of workers in Ethiopia in September 1975 must therefore fall on the EPRP's reckless policy of confrontation. This policy reflects the theoretical inability to reconsider the slogan correctly raised in 1974 ('People's Government') in the face of changing objective conditions. When the EPRP was subsequently subjected to a coordinated attack, its adventurism transformed into pure desperation, and it turned to acts of terrorism.

Meanwhile, the AESM had become increasingly blind to realities. While the independent peasant associations were being eliminated one by one, the intellectuals of the AESM saw only the increasing political space for their own manoeuvres. While the labour movement was bleeding to death, AESM leaders were preparing to cooperate with the military council. The AESM declared that it was now the task of the left to support 'progressive' members of the Dergue in their struggle against its reactionary elements. To defend the 'revolution' anything was justified.

During the autumn of 1975, on the initiative of the AESM, fifteen intellectuals were selected to form a 'provisional bureau for organizing the people' (the politbureau), to provide an advisory unit alongside the military council. The AESM represented the majority in the politbureau, which otherwise consisted of 'independent' left radicals. The Dergue's formation of this unit, ostensibly for organizing the masses, for political training and to prepare for a future change-over to civilian government, thus coincided with the military's brutal suppression of workers' and peasants' independent organizations, as described above.

The AESM excluded the EPRP from the politbureau, but tried to get other left groups involved. Some of those invited, however, refused to take part, so that from the start the politbureau became a purely AESM body in the service of the military leaders. From this base the AESM was now to give 'critical support' to the Dergue, back up its 'progressive elements' and at the same time pave the way for the assumption of power by the people.

THE DERGUE'S CLASS BASE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR HEGEMONY

After one year in power the Dergue had managed effectively to weaken the political power of the landlord class through its anti-feudal reforms. At the same time, however, it released other social forces in the revolutionary process and the Dergue's intervention in

defence of 'law and order' successively estranged the military from many of the groups which had, at the time of the Emperor's removal from power, given them full support. The continuous deterioration of social and economic conditions also made it difficult to rule.

Increasing difficulties necessitated an alliance with one or more classes, and the Dergue therefore made desperate overtures to the left. The creation of the politbureau was an attempt to draw as many left groups as possible into government responsibility and thereby build up a left base for the Dergue. This, however, proved illusory as the politbureau was composed of isolated intellectuals who, after increasing criticism from the remainder of the left, began pushing a pseudo-leftist line with the help of the Dergue's armed forces. This created doubts within the Dergue as to whether this was indeed the political solution previously sought for. In the meantime the politbureau was desperately seeking support from one class after another and it at last found it in the lumpen proletariat. This layer had already been used by the aristocracy and subsequently changed its loyalty to become the social base for the AESM in 1976, after the latter's attempt to mobilize peasants, workers and the petty bourgeoisie had failed.

The politbureau's first move was to rally support from the classes and groups that had earlier been antagonized by the military. The AESM tried to preserve the appearance of being a revolutionary movement with political ties to the masses, but in order to bolster the regime the politbureau was forced to play down criticism from the left opposition and encourage it to support the state instead.

At the end of 1975 and the beginning of 1976 a number of political declarations were made. One advocated arming the peasantry to strengthen peasant associations. Another, full of sweeping rhetoric about power to the people, purported to strengthen urban dwellers' associations. And a new trade union to replace the CELU was decreed together with legislation on work and conditions. All of these proclamations were aimed at recruiting within the mass organizations a leadership loyal to the state and the politbureau. The state thus attempted to build a stratum of loyal leaders within the ranks of the peasant and working classes.

The result, however, was increased confusion. The new declarations spread hopes for influence and power among workers but this quickly led to deteriorating discipline and strikes, without clarifying what the new laws or the state stood for. Among peasants the uncertainty about possible collectivization led to decreased cultivation of the land. While the AESM's followers, backed by what they believed to be the purpose of the declarations, advocated collectivization, the EPRP and independent radicals advocated land redistribution in accordance with the land reform law. Conflicts between the EPRP and the AESM began again to have repercussions in the

countryside. The threat of decreased grain production also caused the Dergue to slow down efforts towards collectivization by emphasizing that every peasant association could pursue its own course of action.

The Dergue was relatively passive during spring 1976, observing the politbureau's attempts to recruit followers. The AESM was forced to revert to its own class (the petty bourgeoisie) to find support because of the deteriorating political situation: the failure to rally support from the countryside, the students' opposition in the cities and the workers' refusal to elect new trade union leaders. A period of open appeal to the petty bourgeoisie whose support in industry, trade and the bureaucracy was essential to keep economic and administrative functions going, then began. And this marked the beginning of a period dominated by the struggle for hegemony within the petty bourgeoisie, between the EPRP, the AESM and the Dergue. The introduction of discussion groups within all of the state-owned companies, the administrative offices and in other businesses gave an aura of democracy to the reformers. This, however, faded in comparison to the National Democratic Revolution Programme (NDRP), which through democratic rights, political parties and a constitution was to lead Ethiopia towards the creation of a people's republic. The programme for solving the Eritrean issue also had a democratic aim. It presented nine points showing how the conflict could be solved by peaceful and democratic means, and how all nationalities and regions would gain the right to self-determination and autonomy. Taken together these declarations would attract not only the radical opposition, but also the democratic forces, particularly within the petty bourgeoisie.

But the reality was different. Workers' discussion groups were scrutinized by people from the AESM, with the result that all important critics were reported and picked up by either the police or the military. The discussions functioned as a way of identifying EPRP members and sympathizers, thereby sharpening the conflicts between the two groups. The workers used the meetings to express different types of demands, but soon found that nothing more happened than that people from the politbureau came and talked on how matters stood.

The content of the NDRP was in the same way contradicted by reality. Two days after the programme was published a peaceful demonstration in Addis Ababa was fired upon resulting in a number of casualties. The demonstrators were demanding simple personnel changes in the Ministry of Culture. Every form of difference of opinion was similarly quelled.

The Eritrea programme was followed by the brutal 'peasant march' on Eritrea. The politbureau and the AESM remained, despite their previously voiced support of Eritrea's right to self-determination,

totally silent in the face of the march. Tens of thousands of ill-equipped and ill-trained peasants, mainly from Tigre and Wollo, were mobilized under false pretences and brought into action against the ELF and EPLF. With the muzzles of the government soldiers' rifles pointed at their backs, the peasants marched against the superior ELF and EPLF troops. In several different areas large-scale massacres of peasants occurred when the military drove the peasants into ELF positions despite pleas to retreat. The peasant march was not ended until the peasants succeeded in convincing the Dergue that they had been militarily defeated. This was finally accomplished when losses became unacceptable and when the peasants began to turn their weapons on the government forces.

THE ATTACK AGAINST THE EPRP

During the spring of 1976, the mass media launched a series of campaigns against 'economic saboteurs' who were blamed for the rapidly increasing prices and the emerging commodity shortages. The trade of grains, spices and other necessary basic food products had begun to face difficulties and had slowed down because of government measures which were often economically unrealistic, and also because of the general apprehension throughout the country which caused a conscious or unconscious 'sabotage' in the form of hoarding and speculation. It is doubtful whether political motivation lay behind this 'normal' commercial reaction, but under the prevailing circumstances it was given political significance. The government and the politbureau attributed all their problems and mistakes to sabotage. Accordingly they thought that economic order could be re-established by punishing 'economic saboteurs'. And as innocent traders began to fall victim to this offensive, many hesitated to engage in any forms of economic activity for fear of punishment. Nor was the state capable of taking over their functions. After a while 'economic saboteurs' became synonymous with 'reactionaries', who in turn identified with 'anarchists' and the politbureau began focussing its repression on its arch enemy, the EPRP.

The EPRP was, however, not mentioned by name in official propaganda attacks against the 'enemies of the revolution' before autumn 1976. But the AESM's own organ had termed the EPRP 'anarchists' for some time. During summer 1976 the politbureau's local commissars informed the government that the EPRP had a stronghold among students and land reform agents in the countryside. At the same time, it was clear that students who sympathized with the EPRP had gained influence over the urban dwellers' associations. The AESM had never aimed at uniting with the EPRP in order to form a broad left front capable of counterbalancing the military.

This is evident both from the circumstances surrounding the formation of the politbureau and the EPRP's reaction to the NDRP.

Much to the politbureau's disappointment, the NDRP did not become an important mobilizing factor for the petty bourgeoisie. But the EPRP revealed in several issues of its paper that the organization was willing to participate in a front against the military with a minimum programme similar to the NDRP. Although the EPRP laid down a series of stipulations or conditions for such cooperation, they nevertheless showed through other concessions that they were willing to negotiate. The difference between the AESM and the EPRP was then that the EPRP emphasized the importance of a struggle to win democratic rights, whereas the AESM felt that existing rights were already 'sufficient' for 'progressives'. It was already evident that the AESM did not include the EPRP in the ranks of 'progressives'. And it soon began attacking the EPRP for 'opportunism' and 'anarchism', thereby creating a complete polarization between the two, and barring any possible cooperation in the future.

The Ministry of Housing which was under the direct influence of the AESM tried to eliminate all of the EPRP's influence in the urban dwellers' associations. A re-election of association leaders which should have taken place in July 1976 was postponed on the ground that the associations were influenced by 'counter-revolutionary elements'. The period afterwards was marked by manipulation within the associations, publication of a new declaration about them, as well as new elections strictly supervised by the military and the bureaucracy. The AESM prepared the associations for a struggle against the EPRP and a wave of arrests swept the cities in September, just before the elections, and those who tried to defend themselves or to oppose the measures were gunned down.

With the shooting of demonstrators, patrols of armed men who were not connected with the police or the military appeared in Addis Ababa. It was only later that it became clear that these were the AESM's cadres with special permission to carry arms and shoot civilians who were accused of being opponents of the revolution. The AESM had for a long time prepared for such action through the military training and arming of its cadres. The urban association militia became the AESM's murder patrols after the rigged elections. Under the leadership of AESM cadres, groups from the associations, many of them recruited from the lumpen proletariat, were armed.

THE DERGUE GIVES IN TO DEMANDS FOR STATE VIOLENCE

But in the countryside, the AESM turned to the military. At a meeting of political commissars, the AESM demanded that the military take repressive measures against the 'anarchists'. This is an important

point in clarifying the AESM's and politbureau's role in relation to the Dergue. Whereas representatives for the Dergue had resisted using force against opposition in the countryside, the politbureau's people threatened and pleaded for the military's help in attacking the EPRP. And finally, because of persistent pressure, the Dergue gave in and purges were carried out in the countryside, in the summer, which were to strike the cities in the autumn. The politbureau was now ready to launch officially attacks against the EPRP in September and October 1976.

The AESM in the name of socialism, marxism and the people had implemented through the politbureau a vulgar political line whereby all opponents were indiscriminately depicted as 'reactionaries'. Social and economic problems were not regarded as the result of objective mechanisms within society, but as creations of different subjective forces such as 'anarchists', 'saboteurs', etc. By the end of 1976 all enemies were grouped together under the heading of the EPRP, and the political campaigns that were waged served to support the use of direct violence, primarily against the left, in particular against the EPRP and its young sympathizers in the cities. Consequently, the EPRP was forced into using terrorism as a political method to combat the murder, arrest and torture of its members and sympathizers. A list of the members of the AESM who were marked for liquidation was distributed and in September the first murder of an AESM member occurred. This gave the military and politbureau increased grounds for stepping up violence against their adversaries in the cities. Since 1976 the level of violence has increased with the EPRP on one side and the AESM patrols, urban association 'militia' and military and police on the other. The military and urban associations have carried out raids in district after district in search of weapons and 'anarchists'. The toll on the youth only in Addis Ababa is in the thousands.

The arming of supporters had been going on in the cities since the AESM took control of the urban associations in autumn 1976. Meanwhile, those peasants who had been meagrely equipped in order to participate in the march were re-designated as a peasant 'militia' in June 1976. The arming of the peasants has since continued and taken the form of forced recruitment to a peasant army. The consequences that were anticipated as a result of the indiscriminate arming of peasants and the lumpen proletariat, were not long in coming. During the autumn of 1976 an uninhibited and uncontrolled mass terror started. The politbureau and the AESM demonstrated the impossibility of maintaining 'critical support' of the Dergue when they resorted to using the lumpen proletariat as weapons to strike down the left. Without knowing it the AESM committed political suicide by exposing itself to the Dergue's goodwill in order to survive.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The most positive thing that can be said about the Mengistu-AESM-politbureau group is that they have tried to carry out a revolution from above. With the help of laws and declarations they hoped to direct peasants, workers and the petty bourgeoisie. Whenever dissension arose, brutal suppression was used. Obviously such tactics can never lead to the liberation of the masses. When it became clear that no support was forthcoming from any specific class there was only one option open to the politbureau-AESM, and this was to recruit corrupt leaders and to arm the lumpen proletariat ('arming the masses') in order to crush the opposition.

The February movement had sprung into existence with surprising swiftness and strength, but perhaps even more surprising is how thoroughly and rapidly the feudal myths and legends of Ethiopia have been crushed for large segments of the population. The bourgeois dictatorship took the form of a petty-bourgeois military regime due to the balance of power between the different social classes at the time. This regime could for a while pursue a radicalized domestic reform policy and a radical foreign policy without severing its ties with imperialism.

The organized left was split into two incorrect lines. The opportunistic faction, under the slogan of 'critical support', collaborated with the military regime without claiming independence from the military-state. The ultra-left wing designated its own organization as an alternative to the present state leadership, and carried out a confrontation policy without a popular base, in a vain attempt to seize power. The regime which had brought about the division of the left into two camps meanwhile benefited from this schism, making independent revolutionary work a near impossibility.

No political force could prevent the military from seizing and consolidating power. The February movement died out in the absence of a revolutionary working class party. The lack of a communist party has devastating consequences for social formations in the process of transformation.

June 1977

POSTSCRIPT

The downfall of the AESM in August 1977 marks the end of the power struggle within the petty bourgeoisie. After beginning to form his own political organization and striking an alliance with the Soviet Union, Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu could dispose of the AESM. From that point on the military has imposed its own direct leadership of the

'mass mobilization' efforts previously undertaken through the agency of the AESM.

While events in 1977 and early 1978 have been dominated by the war between Ethiopia and Somalia, the internal contradictions of Ethiopia remain the decisive factors in the long run for the whole of the Horn of Africa. In this perspective no major breaks have occurred in the trends already visible in 1977.

February 1978

Notes and documents

Knowledge and science should be for the total liberation of man*

We have just heard words of deep friendship towards the people of Mozambique. You have just expressed how deep is the friendship and solidarity the Nigerian people feel towards the people of Mozambique. Since we arrived at this university we have felt solidarity, sympathy and warmth, human warmth. We believe that warmth comes from the heart; comes from feelings which linked us in the past and in the present.

We therefore thank the University for the conferred degree because it is conferred to the Mozambican people who fought and won against colonialism and imperialism. This thanks goes to the University, to the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council, to all the Staff; to all the students, to all those present here and to all the people of Nigeria and particularly to their leader, Lieutenant-General Obasanjo. We say Obasanjo, in particular, because he made possible this profound knowledge which the Nigerian people now have of Mozambique. We speak of Obasanjo because it was mainly through his efforts that we see a consolidation of relations between the two peoples, between the two countries.

For many years we have been more familiar with the universities of the metropolis than with the universities of Africa. The great admiration which we had was always for the universities in the metropolis and not for our universities. So the act which we have witnessed here

*Text of the speech given by President Samora Machel in acceptance of the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws conferred by Ahmadu Bello University, 10 December 1977.

is a source of great encouragement for the Mozambican people, and for the people of Africa. And we shall consolidate this unity of ours because it is a unity which has been washed in blood. We therefore once again say, thank you.

This act is one more bond of fraternity that links two peoples who share a common history of oppression, a common tradition of resistance, a common cultural affirmation. It is one more moment of unity and solidarity within the unity and solidarity of all the African peoples. It is one more affirmation that, regardless of the distances that separate us, we are united in the same determination to fight oppression wherever it exists, and to liquidate the remnants of colonialism in whatever form they manifest themselves.

In conferring this honour on us, in receiving us in your midst, the teaching staff and students of the Ahmadu Bello University are welcoming the fighting people of Mozambique, a people who, led by FRELIMO, defeated Portuguese colonialism. You are recognizing and identifying with the determination of peoples who, yesterday oppressed, are now launching an assault on the last bastions of colonial-capitalist and racist oppression on our continent. In the same way the Mozambican people identify with and recognize the efforts and enthusiasm of the great working people of Nigeria, and their incessant struggle against imperialist designs to divide and weaken them.

Colonialism, a system for the deprivation of an entire people's freedom, is the greatest destroyer of culture that humanity has ever known. African society and its culture were crushed, and when they survived they were co-opted so that they could be more easily emptied of their content. This was done in two distinct ways. One was the utilization of institutions in order to support colonial exploitation. Nothing escaped this take-over bid. The other was the 'folklorizing' of culture, its reduction to more or less picturesque habits and customs, to impose in their place the values of colonialism.

An example of the first method, in our country, was the utilization by colonialism of feudal institutions. Even though the dominant principle was direct administration through Portuguese colonial civil servants, the needs of colonization sometimes required indirect administration to prevail. In this way some feudal states in Niassa province were taken over and their chiefs and sheikhs conserved the appearance of power. Sheikh Mataca continued to maintain traditional rights of life and death over his people, but found himself hierarchically subordinated to the lowest Portuguese colonial civil servant. The people might prostrate themselves as he passed, but his only role of note was the collection of taxes to hand over to the local administrator and the sending of men for forced labour.

In the second case, within the framework of the depersonalization

process contempt for our culture led to the most ridiculous extremes imaginable. In our countries history began with the colonial conquest and was reduced to the exploits of the conqueror. They taught us to admire the deeds of Alfonso do Albuquerque or of Nelson, but were silent about those of Maguiguana or Shaka. We knew in detail the winding course of the Tagus or the Thames, but did not know that great rivers such as the Zambezi or the Niger flowed in the vast African savannahs. Excluded from history, forgotten in geography, we only existed in relation to a colonial point of reference. Thus colonialism asserted that 'Mozambique is only Mozambique because it is Portugal.' It is ridiculous! Colonial education appears in this context as a process of denying the national character, alienating the Mozambican from his country and his origin and, in exacerbating his dependence on abroad, forcing him to be ashamed of his people and his culture. We only have to remember the words of the Cardinal Archbishop of Lourenco Marques, when he said, referring to the role of colonial education: 'Schools, yes, schools that teach just enough reading and writing to enable understanding of the greatness of the nation that protects them.'

By erecting 'assimilation' (the complete identification of the Mozambican with every aspect of the culture and traditions of the colonizing power) as an institutionalized system, Portuguese colonialism brought the process of alienation of the Mozambican to its peak. The ultimate objective was to make out of each Mozambican an *assimilado*, a little Portuguese with a black skin. Colonization thus went beyond the limits of external domination, political oppression and exploitation of the labour force and wealth of the country, to penetrate to the heart of the Mozambican personality, in a real act of rape.

Excellencies

In taking up arms on the 25 September 1964 the Mozambican people not only dealt the blows of revolt against the political system of domination, but also directed them against all those forms of social conditioning and mental subjugation. Consciousness of the dimension of the oppression determined the nature of the liberation. It could be thought that the armed struggle is only a method of action, a simple form of physical violence to force the enemy to withdraw from our territory. And there is no doubt that initially for us the armed struggle was essentially of this character. In the first phase our action was in reality essentially destructive. However, with the development of the struggle, the colonial army was forced to beat a retreat from ever-increasing zones, taking in its wake the colonial administrative exploitative machine. It was here that was posed, not as a technical question but as a demand arising from the development of the struggle itself, the decisive question: what type of

reconstruction to have in these regions, and what type of society to build? The answer is there.

New elements appeared within Mozambican society who proposed to substitute themselves for the fleeing exploiters, attempting to re-establish the capitalist exploitation practised by the Portuguese, in new forms. And we asked, was this really the objective of our fight? Was this really the objective of our sacrifice? The reply of the masses was clear: to reject any restoration of capitalist exploitation. They asserted that they were fighting for total liberation, not to substitute one exploiter for another, whatever his colour. We have an expression in Mozambique: 'a parasite is always a parasite, whether he is white, he is a parasite; whether he is black, he is a parasite; whether he is yellow, he is a parasite'. The parasite does not live on milk, or live from water but from blood. So our enemy was anyone who exploited, anyone who wanted to live from the blood of the people. It was thus that the practice of the struggle itself affirmed the true dimension of the fight: not a simple idealist fight to win the outward symbols of independence; but a real struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

This affirmation of a sovereign people was the greatest conquest of our struggle and marks the great qualitative leap, the transformation of our combat into people's war. The democracy of the people was affirmed, organized, active and conscious. Bursting the chains of passivity they freed themselves, taking up again all their energy and creative initiative. Thus it was the people, mobilized and organized by FRELIMO, who met and chose their leaders, organized administrative life and resolved social conflicts created by colonialism. It was the people who supported the schools, supplied the hospitals, and transported the material to enable the struggle to be extended to increasingly large areas. It was the people who defended their gains with the permanent weapon of people's vigilance.

Cultural rebirth began with the liberation struggle. Long-suppressed manifestations of culture regained their place, and gained a new content in expressing the new life of work and struggle: we sang our fights, we sang our work, we sang our heroes. The fight for literacy and education takes a prominent place. The assimilation of science by the broad masses was the way to guarantee future victories, to combat obscurantism and superstition, to gain a new conception of the world, to define new relations between men and between man and nature. A deep link between theory and practice, and between teaching and production, was established. New relations were established between teachers and pupils, based on the principle that to teach is to learn, and that one learns in order to produce, in a collective effort. This was the character assumed by the Mozambican people's liberation struggle while in process. Our fight began with the objective of freeing our land from foreign domination, and transformed itself into a fight for the total liberation of man.

It is a fight that requires new values of its own, constituting a new way of thinking, new ways of living in a society. The complex tasks of creating a new society, of making the new and breaking the old, sometimes in violent rupture with the past, the need to guarantee complete political independence and to move towards effective economic liberation in a constant struggle against imperialism, demand that we increasingly adopt the new values as a way of consolidating independence.

Science is the product of the joint endeavour of men of our time and of the accumulated practice and study of the generations that preceded us. This intimate and essential link between work and wisdom shows that knowledge has a social nature and an objective. It does not exist in itself and for itself. When the bourgeoisie took over the university, however, they transformed it into an instrument for formulating a class ideology, encouraging individualism, the competitive spirit, discrimination, to sum up, every manifestation of the system of exploitation of man by man.

This elitist conception of the university necessarily creates an artificial division between theory and practice. Knowledge ceases to be the fruit of the joint work of men, and science is removed from its eminently collective dimension. As you know, in highly-industrialized countries today, they turn knowledge and science into an instrument of crime. But we want, in our Ahmadu Bello University, that knowledge and science should be instruments of progress, instruments of liberation. We are certain that this university, its leaders, its teaching staff, its students and all its workers, are conscious that the Nigerian people, like all African peoples, expect that our universities should be detachments of the great army, that is the people, determined to achieve their complete liberation, the people determined to carry the fight against oppression, humiliation and exploitation, against colonialism and imperialism, to the end, and to build a new society. And this was why the people of Mozambique, FRELIMO and the government of the People's Republic of Mozambique have accepted the honour bestowed on us and our struggle by the Ahmadu Bello University.

I want to say 'Long live the friendship between the people of Nigeria and the people of Mozambique' and I want you to answer. 'Viva'. Long live the friendship between the people of Nigeria and the people of Mozambique. *Viva*!

I want to say 'Long live the friendship between Ahmadu Bello University and Eduardo Mondlane University' and I want you to answer 'Viva'. Long live the friendship between Ahmadu Bello University and Eduardo Mondlane University. *Viva!*

I want to say 'Long live the friendship between all the students of Nigeria and all the students of Mozambique' and I want you to say 'Viva'. Long live the friendship between all the students of Nigeria and all the students of Mozambique. *Viva!*

Now, I want to say 'Long live the struggle against neo-colonialism in Nigeria and Mozambique' and I want you to answer 'Viva'. Long live the struggle against neo-colonialism in Nigeria and in Mozambique. *Viva!*

I want to say 'Long live the struggle for the emancipation of African women' and I want you to say 'Viva'. Long live the struggle for the emancipation of African women. *Viva!* It is not loud enough. Don't you want emancipation? I have not heard beautiful Nigerian women voices answering 'Viva'. Long live the struggle for the emancipation of African women. *Viva!* Abaixo Imperialismo! [Down with Imperialism] Abaixo! Abaixo Capitalismo! [Down with Capitalism] *Abaixo*!

Now I will say 'A Luta Continua' and you answer 'Continua'. A Luta Continua! *Continua! Continua!*

Thank you.

SAMORA MACHEL

South Africa: racism and the death penalty*

> The first thing you notice as you come into Central [Prison, Pretoria] is the singing, the sound of the Condemneds. Up behind the huge sign in the Hall saying Stilte/Silence, the Condemneds sing, chant, sing through the day and, before an execution, through the night. At times, the chant is quiet, a distant murmur of quiet humming, softly. Then it swells: you can hear a more strident, urgent note in the swell, sounding through the prison, singing the hymns that will take them through the double doors into the gallows. Fifty, sixty, sometimes seventy at a time up in the Condemneds, singing their fellows through their last nights.
>
> *Bandiet* by Hugh Lewin

On 26 January of this year an extraordinary document was presented to the South African parliament. It is called the 'Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Penal System of the Republic of South Africa' (hereinafter referred to as the Commission Report), and represents a two-year government study of the cause of, and possible cures for, the alarming rise in crime in that country. Much of the report is concerned with punishment. Some of its recommendations might seem useful, such as 'depenalizing' the pass laws,[1] which regulate travel, residence and work among black and Coloured South Africans. Others are simply frightening, such as the recommendation that the Department of Prisons undertake a study of the use of

*Paper prepared for the Amnesty International Conference on the Abolition of the Death Penalty, Stockholm, 1977.

castration as punishment, not only for the mentally ill, but for the 'sexual criminal'.

But what makes this study so extraordinary is that, in a country that often accounts for half the world's reported executions, the vast majority of which it imposes on blacks,[2] not a single word was devoted to capital punishment. The State President's mandate to the Commission was 'to inquire into the penal system of the Republic of South Africa and to make recommendations for its improvement'. But the Commission members were told in the same paragraph, 'the question whether the death penalty should be retained shall not be inquired into'. This directive was interpreted by the Commission of Inquiry to mean that 'the death sentence has been excluded from the terms of reference of this Commission'.

The South African government is, apparently, satisfied with the presence and application of the death penalty. Nor, significantly, is it inclined to tolerate even mild discussion of race and capital punishment in that country.[3] But the fact remains that in South Africa, race and racism are a fixed, integral and often decisive aspect of the process of capital punishment from the causes of capital crime to the moment, literally, that a condemned person is hanged in Central Prison in Pretoria.

A study of the death penalty in South Africa must consider the statutory and common law criminal offences that carry the death sentence. Of these, the several security laws and the crime of treason involve essentially political offences. The other capital crimes are murder, rape, kidnapping, housebreaking with aggravating circumstances, robbery with aggravating circumstances and child stealing.[4] But more and more, deaths in detention, deaths at the hands of the police who are acting 'in the execution of their duties', and mass killings such as those at Soweto in 1976, are perceived as a form of capital punishment in that they deliberately further a state policy not simply of preserving social or civil order, but of protecting the apartheid system.

Further, two facts must inform this discussion. First, the death penalty is used almost exclusively against blacks. Between 1911 and 1969, for example, approximately 2,000 blacks were sentenced to death for murder. The figure for that period for whites for the same crime was between 75 and 85.[5] The most recent figures from the South African government indicate that from July 1975 to June 1976, 60 persons were executed and, at the end of that period, 86 were awaiting execution. Of the executed, two, at most, were white.[6] Between 1 July 1969 and 30 June 1976, 433 persons were hanged in South Africa. The South Africa government does not provide the racial breakdowns for the executions, but their statistics do indicate that of the 651 offenders under sentence of death, who were admitted to prison in that same period, 33 at most were white.[7]

The second critical point is that the death sentence in South Africa is discretionary. Section 330 of the Criminal Procedure Act provides that in all crimes except murder, the death penalty 'may' be imposed. Although the statute provides a mandatory death sentence for murder, an exception is made 'where the court ... is of the opinion that there are extenuating circumstances'.[8] If a judge finds that such circumstances exist, then he may, although he is not required to, impose a lesser sentence.[9] Thus the practical result is that every sentence of death in South Africa has been imposed at the discretion of a judge with the possible assistance of two assessors.[10]

Common law offences and the death penalty

There are several ways to analyse the racial aspects of capital punishment for common law offences such as murder and rape. One approach is to examine the social process that leads to executions; another is by examining the legal process. Since the legal process is best understood in the context of South Africa's unique social structure, it is appropriate to begin with the social forces that produce a high rate of capital crimes and concomitantly, thousands of death sentences. The great number of executions, an official of the South African embassy explained to this writer, are a necessary response to the high levels of violence which, he remarked, 'in some areas are nothing more (to the residents) than a Sunday afternoon soccer match'. That South Africa is a land of violence is plain. In 1974-5, there were 8,500 murders, 9,000 cases of homicide and 128 cases of infanticide.[11] India, with a population nearly 25 times that of South Africa, only has twice as many murders in a year. The United States, considered a country with a high level of violence, has ten times the population of South Africa, but only two-and-a-half times the number of murders. Crime has increased 50 per cent in South Africa since 1966 while, in the same period, the population has increased only 25 per cent.

Although the great majority of crimes are committed by blacks, whites were reported to have committed 180 murders in 1975-6,[12] a figure that is more than one-third that of the homicides reported in that period in England and Wales,[13] whose combined population is 10 times the size of the white community in South Africa. Moreover, in proportion to the population the overall incidence of violence among whites in South Africa that results in convictions corresponds roughly with the same rate among blacks; however, murder and assault convictions occur among whites in proportion to population at a rate far below that of non-whites.[14]

The high levels of violence among blacks, and the consequent prosecutions for murder in which the death penalty is sought, are no doubt a function of poor economic conditions. In multi-racial

societies such as the United States, such conditions often are perceived as a by-product of both contemporary and historic racial discrimination. But in South Africa, apart from the problem of economic inequities, the apartheid policies of the government impact so immediately and harshly on blacks that violent crime can be seen as a direct result of the government's social and political policy. One example is pass laws.

South Africa is possibly the only country in the modern world to use its criminal laws to deter and punish miscegenation (mixed marriages) and social contact between races. The failure of a black to have a passbook in his possession at all times or the failure to obtain approval, recorded in the passbook, for work or living arrangements, is a criminal offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment, which can include forced labour. The result is that South Africa is not so much a police state as it is a 'prison state'. Millions of blacks are detained each year for violation of these laws. Visitors say their most vivid memory of South Africa is the endless lines of blacks outside the police stations or detention centres waiting to explain their failure to have a passbook or the proper authorizations. Each year hundreds of thousands of blacks are jailed for pass law offences.[15] South Africa's prison population, already on a per capita basis the highest in the world,[16] has reached a level where in 1975-6 the number of infants born in prison or jailed with their mothers is greater than the adult prison population of Norway.[17]

The stress placed on blacks by these laws is immense. For example, because of such laws as the Urban Areas Act, a black man who finds a job away from his area of residence must obtain permission to work, to travel to his work, to stay longer than 72 hours, to find a place of accommodation and to remain.[18] His wife and family must obtain permission to visit and to reside with him, the latter being difficult if not impossible to obtain because of the government's desire to limit the number of blacks living outside their designated areas of residence.[19] The result is enforced separation, often, because of difficult and sporadic employment conditions, for years. Moreover, in the 'work' areas no recreational facilities exist for labourers except liquor halls. Blacks are not allowed out of these areas to attend entertainment events. Thus the only outlets for male labourers are prostitutes, homosexuality and alcoholism. It is not a coincidence that the common pattern of murder among blacks in urban areas of South Africa is stabbing that was preceded by heavy drinking.

The pass laws, further, create constant friction between blacks and the authorities. Few blacks consider it morally wrong to violate these laws and, consequently, respect is diminished for all of the government's laws. And little stigma is attached to a prison sentence when so many adults spend time in jail for violating passbook laws. Survival in South Africa for a black depends in large measure on the ability to

break laws and get away with it. Indeed, a South African embassy official acknowledged that the pass laws and similar regulations aggravate and stimulate crime among the blacks, but, he added, 'without these [laws], the country couldn't exist'.

Turning to the legal process, there is a connection between racial attitudes and the treatment of offenders convicted of capital crimes. One of the most conspicuous examples is rape.

There is a vigorously asserted belief in South Africa that criminal laws are administered impartially, that, as the Penal Commission Report states,

> ... our judicial system is above reproach. Comparisons are odious and one cannot ... compare the sentences variously meted out by the courts to Blacks and Whites. Their circumstances, their approach to sentences and their general outlook on life differ radically from those of Whites ... Blacks are, on the whole, treated with consummate fairness by both our lower courts as well as the Supreme Court.

Although this statement in itself is revealing, taking the claim of fairness at face value, nowhere is this assertion more at odds with reality than the history of executions in South Africa for the crime of cross-racial rape. The reaction of the government — executive and judicial — to cross-racial rape in South Africa gives the lie to the claim of that country that 'separate development' is not the same as racism.

In a society structured on racial lines, no act, no imaginable form of conduct disregards the artificial racial barriers more than the rape of a white woman by a black man. It is, in the eyes of the white minority, the most unforgivable breach of apartheid. Not only is violence done to the victim, but in a country in which the psychological well-being of the white depends on separation of the races it strikes at the very heart of the white self-image.

Thus, between 1947 and 1969, 288 whites were convicted of the rape of a non-white; 844 blacks were convicted of the rape of white women. Not a single white was executed. Of the convicted blacks, 121 were sentenced to death, of whom 108 were executed.[20] Indeed, there is no record of a white man ever having been executed in South Africa for the rape of a non-white. Moreover, in the area of violent, cross-racial offences, whites, with one-sixth of the population of South Africa, are increasingly responsible for more offences. In 1974-5, for example, 173 cases of rape of a black woman by a white were reported to the police. The figure for non-white rape of whites was 166. In 1975-6 the figures were, respectively, 191 and 166.[21] Yet there is no record of a white receiving the death sentence for cross-racial rape, although since 1969 it has been imposed on blacks in approximately 20 cases.

One way to understand these patterns is that, in imposing

punishment for capital crimes in South Africa, the courts may treat the race of the assailant and that of the victim as an aggravating factor. Indeed, this attitude has been effectively elevated to the status of a legal principle. There is the report of a judge who, in a cross-racial rape case, held that 'the fact that the accused was black and the complainant was white constituted an aggravating feature, since the shock to her would have been all the greater and sentenced the African to death'.[22] One textbook on criminal law, written by a former judge, states that in cases where the accused is a black man and the complainant a white woman, 'difference of race must ... aggravate the seriousness of any *injuria* committed; under certain circumstances there is no doubt that it makes "injurious", what in its absence would not have been so'.[23] In answering a questionnaire on attitudes among lawyers and judges towards the racial factor in the judicial process, one Afrikaner advocate indicated that he thought race played a deliberate and conscious role in capital cases, and added:

> I have in mind rape. I do not regard discrimination as unfair. For a white woman rape, particularly rape by a Non-White, is a terrible experience. For the majority of Bantu women rape, even by a white, is something which can be compensated by the payment of a beast.[24]

The *pro deo* system is another example of the assumption that cross-racial rape by a black is a capital crime, while if committed by a white it is a far less serious offence. *Pro deo* legal assistance, government-appointed counsel for indigent defendants, is provided only where the death penalty is likely in the event of a conviction. Significantly, several lawyers who have practised in South Africa report that in cases charging cross-racial rape by a black, *pro deo* counsel is almost automatically appointed if the defendant is an indigent. The practice is, however, not to appoint *pro deo* counsel for a white indigent defendant where the charge involves cross-racial rape.

As to executions for murder, the figures for cross-racial incidence are not as complete as those for rape. As mentioned, between 1911 and 1968, of approximately 2,000 persons executed for murder, about 75-85 were white. Of these, only six had killed persons who were not white. While figures are not available indicating exactly how many of the executed blacks had killed across the racial line, one estimate is that 'the number runs into hundreds at least'.[25] The same pattern exists in recent years. Between 30 June 1974 and 1 July 1975, 136 death sentences had been imposed for murder. Blacks received 132 of these sentences, whites four. Of the blacks condemned, none had been guilty of killing a black.[26]

The conviction of the non-whites, particularly for the cross-racial crimes, are suspect on racial grounds. The *pro deo* counsel, who

represent indigent defendants in capital cases, and thus are the lawyers who appear for blacks accused of capital crimes, are by lawyers and non-lawyers acknowledged to be inexperienced, incompetent and unprepared at trial.[27] More significantly, in a society where it is an aggravating factor in a criminal case if the race of the victim is white and the race of the assailant is black, but not the reverse, the credibility of a black defendant relative to a white complainant is commensurately unequal. One lawyer who practised criminal law in South Africa for 20 years put it this way:

> I knew that if I was defending a white man and the only evidence was that of a black, I had a head start on the prosecution. I didn't have to make the point, it was just there. If it was the reverse, a white man against a colored [defendant], then you had a losing proposition. The word of a black man simply doesn't count against that of a white.

Acceptance of complaints by the police, applications for bail, the use of confessions obtained under duress, the publicity given to a trial — all of these aspects of the criminal justice process in South Africa are influenced significantly by colour. As one former South African lawyer phrased it, 'the fabric of the society' depends on favouring the white over the black.

Further, a racial distinction apparently exists in the willingness of the courts and the executive branch to admit that a mistake may have been made in a capital case. It is the proud assertion of the former Attorney-General of the Transvaal that, 'unlike the United States, unlike England, we have, in capital cases in this country, not had a single miscarriage of justice; not a single case where an innocent person has been executed.[28]

One prominent law professor would agree that is the case with respect to whites: 'I do not know of an instance in South Africa of the execution of a White where there is now a widespread conviction that the court went wrong on the facts or on identity.'[29] But, in discussing this point with respect to non-whites, the same professor refers to the testimony of the Reverend Dr Henry P. Junod, who spent 28 years ministering to prisons, where he spoke with 2,000 blacks in the death cells and witnessed 800 hangings:

> We have had cases where, in front of the gallows we have known that the first Crown witness was the one who should have been where the convicted person was, facing death. We could, naturally, not prove it, but the situation was made perfectly clear by long weeks and months with the accused, and by continuing denials up to the last moment, when nothing more was to be gained by adhering to a false story. We remember one case vividly of a very humble and unobtrusive Karanga, telling the Sheriff:

> 'Go and tell your Chiefs not to bring men like me to this place anymore ... ' It is indeed terrible to see a man walk his last steps to the gallows under such conditions ... Mistakes have been made to our knowledge: of that we are perfectly sure.[30]

Finally, punishment in South Africa is generally race-conscious and the pattern of executions may be viewed as an extension of the attitude that black offenders deserve harsher treatment for their offences than do whites. Prison diet in South Africa is graded according to race. Whites receive bread twice a day, plus 500 grams of mealie meal (from maize), 200 grams of oats every week and 170 grams of meat five times a week. Blacks (Africans) receive only maize, no oats, bread once a day three times a week, and 125 grams of meat three times per week. Corporal punishment, which exists in few other countries, is used frequently in South Africa, and consists of lashings with a cane. When a black is lashed, he is tied to a wooden frame; his pants are pulled down and he is hit with the cane until his buttocks look, in one observer's words, 'like a freshly-bitten plum'. Whites, however, are always given some protection — after 1973, they were allowed to keep their trousers on — to absorb the blows.[31]

The night before an execution in Central Prison, the white condemned is allowed to hear his favourite music over the prison loudspeaker. The blacks who must face the gallows the next morning are often harassed with petty regulations, such as no smoking rules. And, in a final, savage gesture, symbolic of South African society, when blacks are hanged, 'the same ropes [are] used over and over again, even though many of them [are] full of vomit and saliva from the hangings before'. But, on the rare occasion when a white man is hanged, the executioners provide a new rope.[32]

Political Offences and Deaths in Detention

In addition to treason, the security laws provide for the discretionary use of the death penalty in political cases. The main security laws are the Suppression of Communism Act 1950, as amended by the Internal Security Act of 1976; the Terrorism Act of 1967; the so-called Sabotage Act, and the Unlawful Organizations Act. These laws are broadly drafted to make illegal any act that might change the status quo in South Africa. Under the Terrorism Act, for example, it is a capital offence, *inter alia*, for any resident of South Africa to encourage social or economic change with the assistance of any foreign or international body or institution. One commentator observed that under this law, a

> ... man who writes lawfully to an agency of the United Nations to

> suggest that a depressed community in South Africa (let us say the Coloured People) be given financial assistance has committed the crime of terrorism! He has committed an act in order to encourage the achievement of social change in co-operation with an international institution.[33]

There is no record of an execution in South Africa under these laws for political offences that do not involve loss of life. One reason is that political trials in South Africa receive a great deal of world attention. Moreover, defendants in these cases do not suffer from inadequate representation and are supported by outside funds. But, in the future, the restraints against execution for political offences may be loosened if black opposition, both violent and non-violent, continues and if the South African government perceives itself as unaffected by world opinion. Indeed, there are signs that this may occur in the near future. In the 'Pretoria 12' trial, where a dozen blacks are charged with terrorist acts, the government took the unprecedented step of announcing its intention, at the start of the trial, to seek the death penalty instead of waiting until the evidence had been brought forth.[34] The South African Minister of Justice, James Kruger, was quoted recently as proposing that the death penalty be mandatory for political offences under the security laws.[35]

Moreover, the death sentence has been imposed — and carried out — for security law offences in the neighbouring countries of Namibia and Zimbabwe. In Namibia, formerly South West Africa, which South Africa has administered since 1966 in violation of a resolution of the United Nations, essentially the same security laws apply as in South Africa. In 1976 two members of the Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) were convicted under the Terrorism Act of allegedly assisting those responsible for the assassination of a political leader. Both received death sentences which were later overturned when it was revealed that a law partner of the lawyers for the defendants enabled the South African security police to obtain copies of documents relating to the defence's case. An observer for the International Commission of Jurists wrote of the trial: 'It would appear manifest from the opening of the case ... and from the nature and scope of the evidence adduced by the prosecution that the trial was conducted primarily with a view to establishing the guilt of SWAPO rather than that of individual accused persons.'[36] The Rhodesian government, also operating in violation of a United Nation's resolution, has executed at least 60 persons between 1965 and 1975 for political offences. Since April 1975, executions have taken place in secrecy.[37]

Ironically, the race of the accused is less relevant in the application of the internal security laws to political offenders than in the

treatment of common law offenders. Although the vast majority of those sentenced under the security laws are black, whites who are convicted of security ofences are dealt with harshly. In 1964, a white man, John Harris, was executed for a bombing that killed one person, an act that was considered a political gesture. Several white men, convicted of political offences and sabotage, are serving life sentences. Breyten Breytenbach, the well-known Afrikaner poet, was convicted in 1975 of Terrorism Act offences for attempting to organize an underground movement against apartheid, and given a nine-year sentence. He has been treated viciously in jail, serving the first two years of his sentence in solitary confinement in a cell adjacent to the death cell at Central Prison.[38] The annual report of the Commissioner of Police for 1975-6, mentions that 'one of the major successes in the sphere of internal security was the arrest and conviction of Breyten Breytenbach'.[39] But, at the same time, because conditions in non-white prisons are far worse than that of the white prison facilities, the harsher treatment of white political prisoners does not compare with the conditions of imprisonment experienced by black political offenders.

Finally, this year world attention focussed on the deaths in detention of black political prisoners. This is a difficult area to examine because of lack of information. But the few facts that are available suggest a pattern.

First, there is an extremely high incidence of deaths among non-political arrestees. In 1976, aside from incidents such as Soweto, 195 people were killed by police 'in the execution of their duties'. All but two of these were black. Of the non-white deaths, 168 were killed while trying to escape arrest. Neither of the whites was killed in the course of an escape. In addition, seven black children were killed by police; all but one were, according to the Minister of Justice, trying at the time to escape arrest. No white juveniles were shot by police.[40]

Secondly, figures for non-political deaths in detention, which may overlap with above figures, reveal that in 1976, 117 persons died in detention. By estimating the numbers of blacks and Coloureds through surname, a rough figure emerges of 80-90 per cent non-white. Of these, approximately 90 per cent died within four days of their arrest. While many of the deaths are attributed to injuries in the course of the crime or in attempting to escape, many are inexplicable. A Johannes Kowane, for example, was arrested for having a 'defective handbrake'. He died in detention two days later of 'natural causes'. An Alfred Mofekung was arrested for not having a passbook in his possession and died five days later of 'natural causes'. Muntulana Luthuli was arrested for 'failing to pay tax'. He died in detention one day later of 'natural causes'. In a country where the great majority of arrested persons are young people under the age of 40, at least 29 blacks died in detention in 1976 of 'natural causes',

virtually all of them within a few days of their arrest. The figure for whites is, at most, two.[41]

Thirdly, deaths among political detainees present a similar pattern. In 1976 18 detainees held for violation of the security laws are known to have died in custody.[42] The total since 1963 is at least 45, indicating a surge in such deaths that parallels the increase in the last year and a half of activism among non-whites.[43] Most political prisoners are young men, yet 10 of the deaths in 1976 were reported to have been due to 'natural causes'. Here, explanations are sometimes given, such as 'slipping on soap in shower', which was alleged to be the reason for two of the deaths.[44] In one case of a political detainee's death in detention, the public was informed by the government that an 'unknown' man, detained at an 'unknown' time, had died on an 'unknown' date for 'unknown' reasons.[45] All but a handful of political detainees are black.

These figures suggest a deliberate government policy of brutality towards black common law arrestees and detainees and especially political detainees, particularly when considered with the government's own figures of convictions among its policemen. In 1976 201 policemen were convicted of common assault on, presumably, prisoners, detainees or arrestees, 24 of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, seven of culpable homicide and four of murder. This was an increase from 1975 when 170 were convicted of assault and four of culpable homicide. But, of the entire complement of policemen convicted of violent crimes in 1976, the majority of whom were black, only 16 were discharged from the police force.[46] Thus, in 1977, the year of Steve Biko's and others' deaths in detention, assuming the worst of the 1976 offenders were dismissed, the South African police force contained at least 220 men who had committed inexcusable acts of violence on prisoners or detainees, 19 of them having done so with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm.

GREG WALLANCE

REFERENCES

In addition to the cited references below, this paper has been based on interviews with former members of the South Africa bar, South African journalists and British journalists with experience in that country, emigrés from South Africa, and an official of the South Africa Embassy in London. Especially helpful material was provided by the International Defence and Aid Fund, the African National Congress, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the South West Africa People's Organization, and the South African Embassy's Information Department.

1 Commission Report. 'Depenalizing' apparently means that violations of the pass laws will still be criminal offences, although jail terms or fines will no longer be imposed.

2 Between 1912, when 24 persons were hanged, and 1969, when 84 were hanged, South Africa climbed to first place in a United Nations survey of the rate of capital punishment throughout the world. In the years 1961 to 1965, 1033 executions were reported to the UN; nearly half of these took place in South Africa. A. Sachs, *Justice in South Africa* (1973).

3 See *Contempt of Court. The Trial of Barend Van Dyk Van Niekerk*, 1970 Acta Juridica 77, 201 (hereinafter cited as Contempt of Court). In 1969, Van Niekerk, a professor of law at the University of the Witwatersrand, published two articles in the *South African Law Journal* that considered the question of capital punishment. In one of these articles he included the result of a survey of advocates on racial attitudes in imposing the death penalty. The survey suggested to Van Niekerk that nearly half of those replying felt that 'justice as regards capital punishment is meted out on a differential basis to the different races, and that 41 per cent who so believe are also of the opinion that such differentiation is "conscious and deliberate" '. Van Niekerk, 'Hanged By The Neck Until You Are Dead', 86 *SALJ* 457, 467 (1969). See 87 *SALJ* 60 (1970). The government of South Africa prosecuted Van Niekerk for contempt of the South African judiciary. The charges were dismissed after the government's presentation of its case.

4 Crim. Proc. Act no. 56 at 1955, 330.

5 *Contempt of Court*, op. cit. The undelivered closing address for Van Niekerk, see above, was published in 1970 Acta Juridica 77. These figures were included in the closing statement and were obtained from statistics provided in the course of the trial by the Under-Secretary of Justice for South Africa. The Van Niekerk figures put the white executions at 75; Albie Sachs, a former South African advocate, places the number at 85. A. Sachs, op. cit.

6 Report of the Commission of Prisons of the Republic of South Africa, for the period 1 July 1975 to 30 June 1976, at 22, 26 (published April 30, 1977) (hereinafter referred to as Prison Report). The data on capital punishment provided by the South Africa government is difficult to interpret for racial significance. For example, we are told in the above report that between 1 July 1975 and 30 June 1976 109 condemned were admitted to prison. Three of these were white. During that period, 60 persons were hanged, but no race breakdown is given. As of 30 June 1976, 86 condemned prisoners were in custody, of whom three were white. The previous year's report (1974-5) informs us that on 30 June 1975 two white condemned were in custody. Thus, it appears that of the five whites present and admitted in 1975-6, three were left in prison under sentence of death by the end of that period. Whether the other two whites were executed is problematic.

7 Prison Reports, op. cit., 1969-76. The execution figures by year are: 1969-70 (80); 1970-71 (80); 1971-72 (56); 1972-73 (55); 1973-74 (43); 1974-75 (59); 1975-76 (60).

8 Crim. Proc. Act no. 56 at 1955, 330.

9 Zeffertt, 'Extenuating Circumstances', 88 SALJ 416, 417 (1971). See *S* v. *Matthee* 1971 (3) SA 769 (AD); *S* v. *Shabalala*, 1966 (2) SA 297 (AD).

10 See Abolition of Juries Act no. 34 of 1969. Although juries, prior to 1969 could make the finding of extenuating circumstances, jury trials in capital cases were rare.

11 Midgely, 'Crime in South Africa', 1 *South Africa Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology 71*, 81 (1977).

12 Annual Report of the Commissioner of the South Africa Police for the year ended June 30, 1976 (hereinafter referred to as Police Report).

13 Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1976.

14 Commission Report. This was for the year 1967-8. Of the total convictions for violent crime in that year, 46, 158 were committed by whites and 398, 106 by non-whites, a ratio of 1 to 8, which corresponded 'roughly' with the ratio of whites to non-whites in the entire population. But for assault the ratio of white

compared with non-white convictions was 1 to 15 (3, 319: 47, 236) and for murder 1:58 (23: 1329).

15 Commission Report.

16 *The Star* (20 January 1973).

17 Prison Report. Between 1 July 1975 and 30 June 1976, 2,870 infants were admitted to, or born in, prison. None were white.

18 Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, no. 25 of 1945, *as amended, inter alia*, Bantu Laws Amendment Act, no. 4 of 1976.

19 See ibid., 9 (2); 10; *International Herald Tribune* (4 November 1977). *See also* Commission Report.

20 *Contempt of Court*, op. cit. The figures used by Van Niekerk, see note 5, above, were provided by the government in the course of his trial.

21 Police Report (1975-6).

22 Sachs, op. cit., citing Diemont J. in *S. v. Ngubelanga*, 6/10/68, unreported (Cape). *See S. v. Germishaya*, van Zijl, J., *quoted in* Maister; R v. D. 1960 (I) SA 151.

23 *Contempt of Court*, op. cit.

24 Ibid.

25 Sachs, op. cit.

26 Prison Reports, op. cit., 1974-75.

27 See Kahn, *The Death Penalty in South Africa*, 18 Tysdskrit Vin Hederdaagse Romeins-Hollandse 108, 136 (1970).

28 Yutar, 'The Office of Attorney-General in South Africa', in *South Africa Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 135.

29 Kahn, op. cit.

30 Ibid. In political cases, there is evidence that witnesses are coerced forcibly into falsifying testimony. Garbus, 'South Africa: The Death of Justice', *New York Review of Books* (4 August 1977). Whether this also occurs in non-political cases is not known.

31 Cook, *South Africa: the imprisoned society* (International Defence and Aid Fund, 1974).

32 Garbus, 'South Africa: the death of justice', *New York Review of Books* (4 August 1977).

33 A.S. Mathews, *Law, Order and Liberty in South Africa* (1971).

34 Garbus, op. cit.

35 *Rand Daily Mail*, (25, 26 August 1977).

36 Press Release, International Commission of Jurists, 11 June 1976.

37 Zimbabwe Briefings no. 1 (Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1977).

38 Garbus, op. cit.

39 Police Report.

40 House of Assembly Debates (Hansaard), 4th Sess, 5th Parliament, 23 March 1977.

41 House of Assembly Debates (Hansaard), 4th Sess., 5th Parliament, 23 February 1977, at 455-66. See Commission Report.

42 *Rand Daily Mail* (24 February 1977). The figure of 18 is disputed by the United Nations, which puts reported political detainee deaths in 1976 at 13. 'Violations of Human Rights in South Africa', UN Economic and Social Council, E/CN.4/NGO/198. (10 February 1977). Bernard Levin of *The Times* put the figure at 11 (11 November 1977).

43 *Focus*, No. 12, (September 1977), (News Bulletin of the International Defence and Aid Fund).

44 'Violations of Human Rights in South Africa', op. cit.

45 Rand Daily Mail, (28 June 1969).

46 House of Assembly Debates (Hansaard) 4th Sess., 5th Parliament (23 March 1977). The breakdown by race for convictions in 1976 was: common assault, 81 whites and 120 non-whites; assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, 5 whites and 19 non-whites; culpable homicide, 3 whites and 4 non-whites; murder, 1 white and 3 non-whites.

Book reviews

Judges and the law: a review article

The Politics of the Judiciary

By J.A.G. GRIFFITHS (London, Fontana, 1978). 224pp. £1.25 paper.

Law and the Rise of Capitalism

By MICHAEL TIGAR and MADELEINE LEVY (New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1977). 320pp. £9.75

In 1900 a newspaper editor published an article about a High Court judge which he later admitted was 'intemperate, improper, ungentlemanly, and void of respect due to his Lordship's person and office'. Only a year before the most senior judges had stated that they were 'satisfied to leave to public opinion attacks, or comments, derogatory of them' (McLeod v. St. Aubyn 1899 AC 541, 551). Now this policy was reversed and the editor/writer was brought before the courts for contempt. He was heavily fined (R. v. Gray 1900 2 QB 36) and it was made clear that the same thing would happen to anyone else who said that judges were not impartial.

Twenty-six years later the editor of the *New Statesman* faced the same charge — contempt. He had published an article warning Marie Stopes and the birth control campaigners that with judges like Mr Justice Avory around ('and there are so many Avory's') they could not expect a fair hearing. He was found guilty and ordered to pay the total costs of the proceedings (1928 44 TLR 307).

According to the traditional theory judges are supposed to be impartial, to act quite independently of government, and be able to exclude from their decision-making their social, political, racial and other personal biases and prejudices. This theory and image of judges must be maintained at all costs. If it goes, the effect, according to

one old Chief Justice, is that it 'excites in the minds of the people a general dissatisfaction with all judicial determinations and indisposes their minds to obey them' (R. v. Almon 1765 Wilmot's Opinions 243). Obeying the law, therefore, is no longer a question of conscience or doing what is right; moral and ideological imperatives disappear. To obey or not is a question of politics and power. If you are strong you get away with it; if you are weak you get annihilated.

Today judges cannot defend their 'independence' by resort to their contempt powers. Their position is much more vulnerable and attacks on their impartiality much more common. Last year a group of women invaded the criminal Court of Appeal protesting vigorously at that court's freeing of a soldier rapist. The bewildered judges retreated quickly. In the old days you could be locked up for suggesting they were biased, prejudiced and unfair. Those days have clearly gone.

Professor Griffith's book is devoted to showing, from a detailed examination of a large number of judges' decisions, that they are not impartial. Its great merit is its clear-cut rejection of the traditional theory in a manner which will make it difficult for his opponents to refute. The author, who teaches at the London School of Economics, has clearly spent a large part of his teaching career reading and discussing the decisions of English High Court judges over a very wide area. Essentially what he has done is to arrange these into different topics — industrial relations, police powers, race relations and immigration, contempt of court, secrecy, property rights and squatting, and the attitudes of the judges to moral behaviour, demonstrations, students and trade unionists. His conclusions are the honest, sober and courageous assessments of someone steeped in the legal tradition. He suggests that it is the function of a judge, whatever the economic system, to underpin the stability of that system and to protect it from attack by resisting attempts to change it.

I have a lot of criticisms of what he writes, particularly of the sections on race and immigration, which could be far more damning. There are also some enormous gaps — nothing on women and no assessment of the judges' role in criminal trials. The case by case method, too, has some unsatisfying features, in that it tends to remove decisions from their social and historical setting. It is, for example, unsatisfactory to deal with judges and the police without discussing the function of the police in a capitalist country and the particular history of the British state. But when he finally tries to place his conclusions in a coherent theoretical framework he gets seriously bogged down. He says he cannot accept a Marxist analysis, because in Russia judges are subservient to the state and perform essentially the same functions as western judges, albeit more open, and more authoritarian. It follows, therefore, that such a function is not peculiar to capitalism and hence cannot be explained by Marxist

theory. This is the old mistake of equating Marxism with what has happened in Russia. Arguing from such a fallacy does not, however, prevent Professor Griffiths reaching the conclusion that all the judges that we know of in the world today are state functionaries. But it does stop him understanding why in some countries, like the USA or Britain, judges find it so necessary to emphasize their impartiality and say they are working for the good of the whole community. This has nothing to do with judicial goodwill or the British character, as some would have it, or the peculiarities of the rule of law, but has been forced on judges by a powerful working-class movement whose interests cannot be ignored in buying their general acceptance of the legal system.* A failure to recognize that, it seems to me, leaves us in the realms of wishful thinking: either judges ought to be more impartial than they are and then the world would be a better place; or we thank our lucky stars that we live in Britain or the US rather than one of those ghastly totalitarian countries, etc.

Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings, the book's publication is a tremendous event. Already it has set the cat amongst the judicial pigeons and their defenders. It has been linked with the threatened boycott by black lawyers of Judge McKinnon's Court at the Old Bailey after his incredibly biased summing up in a recent case of incitement to racial hatred. And in the *Daily Express* (15 February 1978) it has been likened to 'a Bible for the members of Labour's new backbench Inquisition' and called 'dangerous' and 'insidious'.

It is not altogether surprising that a book of this kind should appear at this particular time. People like Professor Griffiths do not voice such conclusions unless they are informed by existing social currents that what they have to say is what large sections of the population are already saying or are receptive to. He is producing a serious attack on the ideology which underpins judicial power at a time when that power is being openly attacked by widely different sections of the working class in Britain today. At the beginning of the century judges were forced for the first time to make concessions to growing working-class power. The state could no longer afford to have judges who did not disguise their ruling-class biases. But they kept botching things up. Decisions they made had to be reversed by new legislation (e.g. Trade Disputes Act 1906).

The difficulties judges had in dealing with the new requirements of their office were summed up by a senior judge in 1920: 'It is very difficult sometimes to be sure that you have put yourself into a thoroughly impartial position between two disputants, one of your

*This was not always the case. The origins of 'judical independence' are to be found in the events leading up to the constitutional settlement of 1688 and the new role given to judges to uphold the settlement against the incursions of the king — in other words, to act as an independent arbiter of the constitutional bargain between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie.

own class and one not of your class' (Scrutton L.J. to Cambridge University Law Society, 18 November 1920). In the end the judges managed to preserve and enhance their reputation by a general withdrawal from any kind of judicial activism, especially in industrial relations, and from any kind of open political alignment.

This was fine while working-class power was largely channelled through trade unions in the factory and the Labour Party in the community. But it did not satisfy businessmen who disliked an out-of-touch judiciary. They wanted, and from about 1955 got, a judiciary which was more responsive to their needs. At the same time, as the working class broke away increasingly from the grip of the union leadership and the Labour Party in the late 1950s and 1960s, the aid of the judges was increasingly sought to curb the new activity and to define the frontiers of the new social truces being enacted by Parliament or negotiated by the unions. Time and again the judges' ideas of how much the state is willing to concede have failed to come up to the expectations of one or another section of the population. The result has been an increasing crescendo of criticism and abuse. Whole sets of laws were openly defied in the early 1970s (industrial and housing) and some attempt was made in Parliament to remove from office one of the judges principally involved. Shortly before, the partiality of judges in criminal trials had been exposed — and new levels of defiance of judicial authority reached — in the Mangrove trial. More recently there has been the invasion already referred to of the Criminal Appeal Court by Women against Rape. Undoubtedly Professor Griffith's book provides ammunition for these struggles, just as they have put him in a position where he can safely put his conclusions on public view.

Michael Tigar and Madeleine Levy's *Law and the Rise of Capitalism* is a different kind of book. Within its 320 pages the authors attempt to do many things. For example, they have tackled the question of how law can be used to effect social change — what they call the development of a 'jurisprudence of insurgency', which roughly translated means that lawyers will lead the revolution, because they will be able to tell the rest of us that bourgeois law cannot satisfy our needs. They have tried to solve the problems of the individual lawyer committed to social change. Basically this means battling as a lawyer to see that people are not deprived of the civil liberties guaranteed in the US constitution and pointing out how readily the bourgeoisie depart from their own ideology. And they describe the need for 'a group challenging the old order' to formulate its own jurisprudence against that of the old order. The underlying assumption here is that the new post-revolutionary society towards which we are heading will still be dependent on law as a vital means of social control, and will still need a coercive state apparatus, headed no doubt by the radical lawyers, to keep us in control, but also to defend whatever civil

liberties we may retain under the new system.

This theoretical mish-mash apart, the substance of the book traces how the ideas of bourgeois law grew within feudalism, competed with it and finally overcame it. This is its most valuable section, based on serious historical research. Here Tigar and Levy illustrate, with a wealth of material, that feudal law was quite different from the bourgeois law which replaced it — and similarly the bourgeois state. They also root the development of bourgeois law in the emergence of capitalist relations of production and, in particular, they link contract law to the development of trade and commodity production. In other words, they lay the basis for an analysis of the fundamental characteristics of bourgeois law today and for seeing what it is that will disappear in the new society. But they do not carry out this analysis.

What they pick on and highlight from the bourgeois struggle against feudalism are the new civil liberties — the right to silence, due process, etc. Because, I suspect, they are basically civil liberties people, they fasten on to this aspect of emergent bourgeois society, and say that these gains are still of value today and must be defended. Quite right. But they say nothing of the subsequent impact of working-class power on civil liberties. Some civil liberties, such as the right to silence and the right to due process, can be directly traced to bourgeois/feudal conflicts, but others, like rights of assembly, right to a fair rent and security of tenure, right to organize, etc., are entirely the creation of working-class struggle and power — our transitional triumphs if you like.

Secondly, the authors have nothing to say about those feudal relationships and forms of legal control which were not rejected but were taken over and given new impetus by capitalism. I refer in particular to those laws which maintained the subordinate position of women in marriage, family and the home, and penalized through rape, prostitution and illegitimacy laws any attempt to escape from the imposed female role. We cannot speak of law and the rise of capitalism without giving these a central place; yet they are not even mentioned.

Thirdly, having said much about the development of contractual relations, Tigar and Levy miss entirely their crucial impact. These did not just regulate the relations of merchants involved in commodity exchange. They also became the formal expression of the key relationship between the emergent male working class and their capitalist masters. These contracts had four characteristics: (1) they were made between people who contracted on a basis of equality; (2) both were free, not serfs or slaves, though in the case of the working class they were also 'free' from any means of producing or of subsisting outside of this 'freely' entered relationship; (3) both were exchanging property — the workers' bodies or minds for the capitalist's wage, and (4) the exchange was to the mutual advantage of each.

From this contractual base stems the idea of the social contract, the system of parliamentary democracy which builds on it and the notion that the state represents the will and free consent of the whole population.

And why is this contractual development so important? First, because it is one of the pivots of the whole legal system, as I have briefly outlined. Secondly, because, as Marx carefully explained in *Capital*, it is the form which masks the source of profit or surplus value and thus the exploitation of the working class. Why? Because at any given standard of living the working class create more value through their work than they need to live on through their wage or lack of it. Class struggle is the struggle to alter the terms of this relationship. It is the function of all law, including that which deals with civil liberties, to maintain the conditions in which the continued exploitation of the class can go on under the guise of freely-entered, mutually-advantageous contracts, supervised by a democratically-elected government which looks after all our interests.

From this short account I hope I make my position clear. I see no fundamental change in the way we relate to our fellow human beings, which does not involve the abolition of all law as we know it. Let me approach the same question in a different way. In a famous passage in his *Preface to a Critique of Political Economy*, Marx says:

> No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed [Tigar and Levy demonstrate this very concretely in their historical section dealing with feudalism], and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions of their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.

So it is undoubtedly true that new legal forms which would predominate in bourgeois society appear during the existence of feudal society and eventually replace them. That is really the thesis of Tigar and Levy's book. But the new bourgeois society is still a class society which needs laws and a repressive state apparatus to maintain the dominance of the new ruling class. What is valid for the transition from feudalism to capitalism is then crudely transplanted by our authors into present-day conditions. Because bourgeois lawyers had a big role to play in the transition from feudal law to bourgeois law, the authors presuppose an equally big role in the transition to a non-capitalist society. Behind all that they write there is an assumption that after capitalism we shall still have a social process of production which takes an antagonistic form, in which the interests of a dominant class are maintained by a state and legal apparatus. Obviously in such a society we shall still need our civil liberty laws and lawyers. Against that view is the position of Marx that the bourgeois form of production is the last antagonistic form of the

social process of production, the last class society. The task then is not to develop our own jurisprudence against that of the old order, but to identify the human needs of the class against all jurisprudence.

The Temple, London IAN MACDONALD

Black people in Britain 1555-1833

By FOLARIN SHYLLON (London, Oxford University Press, for the Institute of Race Relations, 1977). 300pp. £8.50

We regrettably know little of the prolonged black presence in English life just as, until only recently, we knew little of the black record in the American revolution and the American civil war. We are in Folarin Shyllon's debt for making a start in this book, successor to his earlier *Black slaves in Britain*, in resurrecting the history of that presence. Excavating deeply into the rich archival material, like any good historian, he has written, in effect, a whole new chapter in English social history. We see the privileged caste of black princes, students, page boys, servants and scholars which goes back, indeed, to the Restoration; the black poor in the scabrous underworld of eighteenth-century London; and the marginal groups of mendicants, beggars and the rest, painted in almost Dickensian fashion in the early nineteenth-century books of Pierce Egan and Henry Mayhew. These are, all in all, what Wylie Sypher, in his brilliant study of 1942, has called 'Guinea's Captive Kings'. Shyllon's study makes us realize, yet again, how much the return of the colonial native is a real fact in the history of British imperialism, and what a deep historical background it possesses. Far better than any historical romanticized fiction, like Haley's *Roots*, it shows us how the search for racial identity and interracial equality goes back to the noble struggle of men like Cuguano, Ignatius Sancho and Equiano to combat racism in an earlier period. We cannot understand Powellism and the National Front today unless we understand what those men were fighting against two centuries ago.

Yet, having said that, the book raises perhaps more problems than it solves. Shyllon is excellent as the narrative historian. He is possibly not so good as the critical analyst. His main thesis is, quite simply, that 'racism has been the British way of life since the first blacks settled in Britain'. He does not define in any rigorous sense the meaning of racism, although apparently he believes that it is sexual in origin; hardly a thesis that can be squared easily with an economic interpretation. Nor is it any more plausible to argue that English attitudes have remained the same throughout four centuries. Hakluyt's Elizabethan attitude is not the same as, say, that of Hume and Gibbon later on. Shakespeare's major prejudice was anti-semitic

rather than negrophobe, as a comparison between his treatment of Shylock and Othello makes clear. Shyllon quotes the paranoid racism of the Jamaican planter-historian Long. But Long's book was the Bible of the West Indian planter lobby and hardly that of the more liberal voices of the English ruling class — like Fox, the younger Pitt, and Burke himself — who supported the anti-slave trade cause. And, as Shyllon himself shows in his own narrative, important sectors of English opinion — from Quaker to Anglican, and from aristocratic liberalism to middle-class religious humanitarianism — spearheaded the struggle against both the trade and, later, slavery itself. To argue in favour of a presumed permanent English racist psyche, everlasting and unchanging, is not only pessimistic; it also inferentially embraces those scholars who have argued that slavery is the result of racism and not racism the result of slavery. It thus confers on ideologies an independent life of their own, as if they existed independent of historical time and space. That is a mode of analysis not merely profoundly un-marxist; it is profoundly unsociological. Shyllon is bitter about English racism, as he has every right to be. But the circumstantial evidence of his own book demonstrates that it has not always been shared by every social class or by every sector of opinion.

Why does not Shyllon emphasize this in his more theoretical passages? It is because, I guess, he writes essentially in terms of black nationalism rather than in terms of radical sociology. He fails to see that it is not racism, but capitalism, first commercial and then industrial, that made slavery possible in the Americas. That explains why he underestimates, as against open racist antipathy, the element of social snobbishness as related to class distinctions in the general English attitude to newcomers. That is why, even more, he tends to see figures like Cuguano and Equiano in almost exclusively ethnic terms. For him, they are not Afro-West Indians or Afro-Americans but black Africans seeking salvation in black solidarity. So to see them, I suggest, distorts the real situation. Ignatius Sancho made Sterne his literary model and wrote himself in tones of Sternian whimsy. Both Cuguano and Equiano accepted Christianity with all the fervour of a Clarkson or Wilberforce; and Shyllon himself apologetically remarks that Equiano's Calvinism will not go down well with many today. This is in no way to detract from their record in the struggle against slavery. It is simply to emphasize the very natural fact that like everybody else they were the children of their time and imbibed the spirit of the age in which they lived. In much the same way, later on, Blyden advocated a syncretic new religion combining western and African religious elements; Garvey accepted the ideology of the western business civilization, but arguing that the great white entrepreneur must now be followed by the great black entrepreneur; while, as a final instance in the Hispanic Caribbean, the anti-American

struggle of Albizu Campos in the Puerto Rico of the 1930s was based on a traditional hispanophilism that sought to resurrect the old values of the Spanish church and monarchy. We go wrong if we seek to pretend that men like these were not what they were.

Yet the final remark on this book must be more positive. What Shyllon describes is, so to speak, the historical background to the present-day situation of an increasing black-brown-yellow minority in English life. Britain created the West Indian, the Indian and the African black and Asiatic. Now those peoples, in the form of the post-1945 immigration movement, begin themselves to shape the English, to take their revenge. Edmund Burke anticipated that situation long ago in his speeches of the Warren Hastings trial. Today, he observed, the cause of Asia is tried at the bar of the Commons of England, tomorrow the cause of England will be tried at the bar of Asia. This, in a very real sense, is what this book is all about. I am sure that the author would agree.

University of Puerto Rico G.K. LEWIS

An Eye to India: the unmasking of a tyranny

By DAVID SELBOURNE (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977). 576pp. £1.50

David Selbourne visited India as Aneurin Bevan Memorial Fellow in 1975-6, at a time when the now-notorious 'Emergency' imposed in June 1975 was in full swing. Hailed by the Congress Party and its supporters at home and overseas as a progressive measure to combat the 'dark forces of fascism' and a means to uphold 'socialism' and preserve 'democracy', the Emergency in fact marked the culmination of a period of recurring economic and political crises for the Indian ruling class; it was an attempt to solve them once and for all by the indiscriminate application of brute force and coercion to all sections of the population and individuals who opposed the misrule of Indira Gandhi's government.

As a foreigner and a scholar, Selbourne was afforded both hospitality and facilities by 'official' India. His hosts were no doubt confident that he would be suitably impressed by their glib statistics and bland assertions that the Emergency was of the greatest benefit to the Indian people. Instead, their guest produced, with meticulous detail and documentation, an analysis of the Emergency which ruthlessly exposes their callousness, lies and hypocrisy — as well as analysing the contradictions inherent in a system which professes socialism and practises a peculiar mixture of feudalism and capitalism; protects and nurtures the rich to 'serve the poor'; claims independence and mortgages the country to an array of foreign powers.

Selbourne begins with a detailed exposure of the condition of the Indian people and the increasing tyranny that has been employed in recent years to ensure that they remain in that condition. He goes on to describe the shock of the Emergency itself, with its arrests and detentions, censorship, strangling of trade unions and arbitrary removal of civil rights. In contrast with the suffering of the general populace, there is the satisfaction of big industrialists and overseas investors. Under the banner of the supposedly new economic programme to help the poor, there are the forces of landlordism ensuring that it is never carried out. On the pretext of cleaning up the country, there are forced evictions, labour camps — and, to quell the threat contained in the very numbers of the poor, compulsory, brutal and arbitrary sterilization.

Selbourne reveals the true nature of the Emergency by the simple method of describing its effect on various sections of the population, drawing on numerous examples from his personal experience and documented sources. His argument is reinforced by unfailing irony and a technique which juxtaposes extremes of poverty and luxury, reality and illusion, assertion and fact. Interspersed with page upon page of quotation and example are a good many purple passages, some of them extremely evocative. Particularly moving are some of his descriptions of India's working people. Nevertheless, I feel that his mingling of political content with poetic language has not quite succeeded, and that a little economy in both style and content would have given the book an even greater impact. It is as if the trees prevent the reader from seeing the wood.

Nevertheless, this is an important book on a significant phase in India's history. As well as being an account of personal outrage, it is a useful reference work. In addition to the text, there are selected documents pertaining to the Emergency, a series of highly relevant statistical tables and a copious list of notes. The latter are not essential to an understanding of the text, and the book reads better if one does not refer to them too much; but, from the author's point of view they are an essential weapon for self-defence against the inevitable denials and refutations from the people whom he exposes. Though some of them are in the political doghouse now that the Emergency is over, many are to be found in the cheering ranks of Janata government supporters. Emergency India is not dead but sleeping — fitfully.

London MARY TYLER

The Big Nickel: Inco at home and abroad

By JAMIE SWIFT and THE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION CENTRE (Between the Lines, 97, Victoria Street North, Kitchener, Ontario). 173pp. $5.

In October of 1977, as Canadian unemployment headed towards 10 per cent, the International Nickel Company of Canada (Inco) announced major lay-offs at its Sudbury nickel mine. The world-wide economic recession and the temporary absence of a good war had affected the demand for nickel. At the same time Inco had brought into production mines in Guatemala and Indonesia. In the circumstances it seemed safer to upset the pliant government of Canada than the military dictators of Guatemala and Indonesia, so the cutbacks hit Sudbury.

Inco is a multi-national corporation much like any other; its history an unedifying saga of exploitation, corruption, union busting, warmongering and environmental destruction. During the First World War it managed to sell nickel to both sides, prompting complaints even from its supporters that nickel mined by Canadian workers was being fired at their fellow countrymen.

The transient nature of the labour force, the use of immigrant labour deployed to maximize divisiveness and the employment of goons and Pinkertons delayed effective union organization until 1943. Subsequently the split between the social democrats and the communists in the North American labour movement, avidly encouraged by the cold warriors, divided the Sudbury mine workers in a bitter conflict the legacy of which still remains. Mine Mill, the original organizing union, was ultimately usurped by the Steelworkers. Only one small Mine Mill local survived those battles.

In the 1960s Inco expanded first into Guatemala and then into Indonesia, countries which contain the only other known major nickel deposits. In both countries Inco's investment followed brutal military repression. In Guatemala the company's leading critic Adolfo Mijangos was murdered by a right-wing death squad. In Indonesia, after *Time Magazine* reported that 'killing has been on such a scale that the disposal of corpses has created a serious sanitation problem', Inco's assistant vice-president explained the attraction of the country:

> Indonesia is becoming quite stable politically ... I think the most important consideration is the freedom of movement of funds, and the necessarily favourable climate to make investments satisfactory and relatively safe.

The dubious benefits of Inco's operations are vividly evident in Sudbury. The massive emissions of sulphur dioxide have resulted in a landscape best compared to that seen in the lunar landings. Vegetation

has been destroyed for miles around and there is a serious problem of soil erosion. An unpublished Canadian government report estimated the annual cost of environmental damage from Inco's Sudbury operations at close to four hundred million dollars. This is not the only cost. Between 1960 and 1974 seventy-one workers were killed at Inco's Sudbury mines. A large number have died prematurely as a result of industrial diseases contracted through unsafe working conditions, including at least fifty who contracted cancer working in Inco's sinter plant. Given Inco's record on the environment, labour relations and safety when it has to operate within a parliamentary democracy, its impact in Indonesia and Guatemala can be imagined.

The strength of this book, produced by a collective working to politicize development issues in English Canada, lies in the clarity with which it exposes the workings of Inco. For many Canadians Guatemala and Indonesia are remote. Inco in contrast is a household word. This critical anatomy of a multi-national corporation will reach an audience which may be missed by broader studies of imperialism. It is a book written more for those who work at Inco than for those privileged to conduct their studies in universities. The book's introduction is provided by the local union president and the book was officially launched before two hundred workers at the Sudbury union hall. After the latest lay-offs the support for nationalization among Inco's mine workers is strong. This book situates Inco within the larger capitalist system and answers any residual doubts about compensation.

Polytechnic of the South Bank MARTIN LONEY

Soweto. A people's response. Sample survey of the attitudes of people in Durban to the Soweto violence of June 1976

By RAZIA TIMOL and TUTUZILE MAZIBUKO (Institute for Black Research, Box no 19109, Durban, 1977). 96pp. R3/-

Black Trade Unions in South Africa: the responsibilities of British companies

By RODNEY STARES (London, Christian Concern for Southern Africa, 1977). 82pp. £5 for companies; £1.50 for associates.

The survey of attitudes to the Soweto events is based on an opinion poll of some five hundred people, black and white, in the Durban area. The questionnaires to which they responded covered such matters as their attitude to change by violent or peaceful means; the type of government they envisioned in the future; the most effective means of bringing about change; the most likely means of change;

the most desirable government: white, black, multi-racial or non-racial, communist or socialist.

Not surprisingly, many people who were approached by the Institute for Black Research refused to cooperate, stating they had no interest in politics: the fear of police attention was too great. The writers of the *Sample Survey* therefore indicate 'that the sample is skewed in favour of the younger, less illiterate and less deprived members of the Durban community'; and conclude:

> The results are reassuring in that most people interviewed hoped for peaceful change, disquieting in that they saw more explosive violence ahead of them — disturbing that most Africans hoped for and saw an Africanist or Black government in power in the next 10 years, most Whites a White government.

While one is sympathetic to a journal of this kind, trying to do legal work under the most daunting circumstances, one must doubt the value of the sociological exercise. Under South African conditions the opinion poll does not reflect the authentic voice of the people. All the same, an opinion poll of this kind would have little value even in countries where people do not fear police reprisals.

In a foreword to *Black Trade Unions in South Africa*, Jack Jones, of the TUC, writes: 'Time is running out and trade unionists should make a stand against the repression of the black people of South Africa. If there is a failure to respond the future of South Africa could be very bleak indeed'. The author of this study is clearly concerned that the growing strength of black trade unions, operating underground, would imperil the vast stake of British capital in apartheid. He therefore wants British firms to take a more far-sighted view of their interests in South Africa. They should pay the black workers the subsistence rates as determined, ideologically, by various liberal studies, rates which are far below those of the white workers. They should also encourage the growth of registered African trade unions so that grievances could be formally ventilated, black leaders identified and steps taken in good time to prevent widespread industrial unrest.

Christian Concern for Southern Africa feels that the interests of capital and labour are not only congruent but identical. But effective black trade unions are really contingent on the renovation of South African society from top to bottom. Such a social overturn involves the seizure of British and other foreign assets by a revolutionary government. No wonder the TUC warns that time is running out.

London KEN JORDAAN

Jhagrapur: poor peasants and women in a village in Bangladesh

By J. ARENS and J. VAN BEURDEN (Birmingham, Third World Publications, 151 Stratford Road, B11 1RO, 1977). 188pp. £2.

Arens and van Beurden are a Dutch couple who were sponsored by the Christian Organisation for Relief and Rehabilitation to write a report about a typical village in Bangladesh for the use of foreign development organizations, government officials and academics. In the course of their stay in Bangladesh, Arens and van Beurden realized that the organizations and people they were writing for 'were — often unintentionally — working against the interests of the rural poor'. The report they eventually produced was about 'issues relevant to those who are trying to guide the peasants in their own liberation'. Because of disagreements with CORR they ended up having to publish it themselves. The result is a long-winded but painstakingly detailed and sincere book about the relationships between rich and poor peasants in one village in Bangladesh. It contains hardly any a priori assumptions; almost everything described has been found out by talking to the villagers or by sharing their lives.

Jhagrapur (a pseudonym which means 'quarrel village' and refers to the endless feuds over land snatching which is a characteristic of rural Bangladesh) is a small, remote village outside the immediate economic influence of any large town. Of the 173 families who live in it, 50 per cent are poor peasants owning little or no means of production.

The book deals with two main subjects — the roles and lives of women, and the economic structure and balance of power in the village. We are given a vivid and intricate picture of a rural economy which lies just outside the sphere of capitalist agriculture (with its cash crops and labour-saving machinery) but is now beginning to feel its indirect effects. Displaced labourers are coming to Jhagrapur from nearby villages, wages are being pushed down and traditional employment patterns are changing. The patrilinear groups of families which were once the basic economic units have already ceased to have any economic significance. These changes have brought more intense poverty and exploitation to the poor and middle peasants. Because labour has become cheap, sharecroppers are being turned off their land. Poorer peasants are increasingly falling into debt and losing what little land they own, and as a result an impoverished proletariat is growing. Real wages have been steadily falling — in 1975 they were 40 per cent of what they were in 1969.

The chapters which deal with the women's roles are the least successful parts of the book. A number of facts about the acute misery and oppression of women's lives are presented, a few myths (such as the belief that women do not play an essential part in the production process) are exploded. But despite this, no clear picture

of the women's lives or how they feel about them emerges. In describing the economic position of the peasants the authors have examined in detail the network of relationships which place people where they are in the power hierarchy. But the relationships which women have with male and female members of their families and with neighbours are not similarly examined. Women are in fact treated as a separate class oppressed by men, but with few relationships of interdependence either within this class or outside it.

The last two chapters are about the methods and possibility of struggle in the villages of Bangladesh. The authors describe instances where poor peasants, sometimes with the help of underground left groups, have taken land from rich and exploitative landlords. These struggles against landlords are seen as nuclei for a coming struggle for liberation.

The advantages of presenting everything from a village level are evident throughout the book, but so unfortunately is the main disadvantage — because everything is presented from the point of view of someone who has never been outside Jhagrapur, village politics are hardly ever placed in a wider context.

London AMRIT WILSON

Race First: the ideological and organisational struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association

By TONY MARTIN (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 1976). 448pp. $17.50

The significance of Marcus Garvey to the struggle for black self-emancipation was re-discovered by the Black Power movement of the 1960s. Gradually we have become aware of the importance of Garvey to the political development of Kenyatta, Nkrumah, Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X and the Rastafarians. Now Tony Martin has given us an important insight into the origins of Garvey's contemporary significance. He has provided us with a scholarly account of the early development of Garveyism and the UNIA — an account which I suspect will become the first point of reference for those seeking to understand Garveyism.

Martin has organized his book in terms of separate discussions of Garveyite theory and practice. His chapters examine such components as nationhood, religion, propaganda, Africa, the Black Star Line, but for me it is the three final (and longest) chapters that are the most instructive — those on Garvey's relationship with the revolutionary socialists, the integrationists and the Ku Klux Klan.

Marcus Garvey was an enigma, and the problem with Martin's book is that it does little to enlighten us on the crucial ambiguities of

Garvey's personality and political philosophy. Perhaps most important here was Garvey's understanding of the relationship between race struggle and class struggle. Martin tells us that he praised Lenin, Trotsky and Soviet Russia, but hated the American revolutionary socialists — black as well as white — partly because of their opportunism, but primarily because of their insistence on the supremacy of considerations of class over considerations of race. Although Martin points up the inadequacies of the American socialist theories of race and class during the 1920s, we are given no insight into Garvey's understanding of this dialectic.

Throughout the book, Garvey's theory and practice seem to be accepted at face value. Nowhere, not even in the chapter on his relationship with the Ku Klux Klan, does Martin offer a word of criticism. But surely there is plenty in Garvey that should be analysed and criticized — not least his political style and his emphasis on black capitalism of the Booker T. Washington variety.

Martin's book is primarily a descriptive account, with little analytic content. How much better the book would have been if he had analysed, say, the structure and social composition of the UNIA (which might, among other things, have suggested how democratic the UNIA was, and whether the charge of Du Bois, Randolph et al that the UNIA was primarily a West Indian organization, out of touch with the struggles and consciousness of Afro-Americans, was justified or not), and addressed himself to the central problem of the race-class dialectic in Garveyism. It would have made Martin's attempt to rescue Garvey and Garveyism from the distortions of liberals, socialists, historians and commentators that much more effective.

University of Birmingham JEFF HENDERSON

Cudjoe the Maroon

By MILTON MACFARLANE (London, Allison and Busby, 1977). 144pp. £3.50.

Cudjoe the Maroon recounts the stirring history of Maroon resistance to enslavement and colonization, first by the Spanish and then by the British, under the leadership of General Cudjoe, 'the first successful revolutionary of the New World'.

Macfarlane is himself a Maroon, a descendant of Cudjoe, and one of the first to leave the closely-knit and, outside Jamaica, little-known community for education abroad. His book is based on the oral traditions handed down from one generation to another — in his case from his grandfather, Grandpa Wallen — and hitherto kept a well-guarded secret:

> At this point in the story he paused, fixed a steady gaze at me, and gave the usual warning that never should I repeat to any stranger — a 'backra-man' or an outsider — the things he related to me about the before-time people. These were the secrets, as well as the strengths of the Maroons ...

That these secrets, so carefully treasured — the wealth of detail relating to every incident, not all of it attributable to the author's imagination, attests to that — should now appear in print reflects perhaps the gradual erosion of the community and signals its future absorption. Surprisingly, Macfarlane does not make his motives clear for writing the book, but one suspects it is partly to dispel the prejudices about the Maroons, 'a half wild and dangerous people' ... 'two tourists ... had strayed into a Maroon town ... and ... had been burned to death ... ', and, more strongly, out of pride and delight in the history of his people.

The forebears of the Maroons were originally brought by the Spanish from the West Coast of Africa to Jamaica where, after refusing — despite torture and beatings — to work as slaves, they apparently submitted only to escape to the tropical mountains, establishing a community there and living by tilling the soil, hunting, fishing and fruit gathering. The Spanish, after fruitless attempts to recapture them, left well alone. Not so the British, who, wresting Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655, were determined to hunt down and enslave the Maroons. This determination increased as the shortage of slave labour became more acute in Jamaica's expanding economy, as the Maroon raids on the plantations became more disruptive and as increasingly they attracted runaway slaves to them. Time after time different strategies were devised (including the use of Mesquito Indians from North America to track the Maroons down) to defeat them — with so little success that, by 1739, the British were forced to seek Cudjoe out and make a peace guaranteeing the Maroons security, control of their mountain territories and freedom from enslavement. Slavery was not abolished in the rest of Jamaica for almost 100 years.

What emerges from this vigorous account is how masterly Cudjoe was both in organizing his people in peace, and as a guerrilla leader. The strengths of the community as a whole came from its strict adherence to the principles and traditions of West African communal living, which 'transported almost intact to the Jamaican mountains [enabled] the Maroons to govern themselves with internal peace'. The skilful adaptation of the Maroons' old customs to their new situation meant that, as long as they stayed on their own ground, they could not be defeated. Thus, when an attack threatened, their drumming skill, normally used for festivals and celebrations, was used exclusively to warn of the enemy's approach; the *abeng* (a type

of horn) was used to convey news, warning and messages from one settlement to another. Indeed, one of Cudjoe's first acts was to disperse the growing population among five carefully chosen and concealed sites, so that a single attack could never decimate the whole. More than anything, however, it was the traditional African skill of camouflage which the Maroons developed to a fine art and which consistently and continually bewildered the British. After one major encounter:

> Cudjoe's intelligence officers brought back word that British troops told of having seen not one Maroon, but of hearing their noises and shouts. The Maroons were evil spirits said some reports. Still other reports claimed that the Maroons were invisible. In fact one soldier was immediately committed to an institution because he insisted he saw a tree about 10 feet high strangle a soldier to death.

Cudjoe lived only a few years after the treaty was concluded; slowly the community was opened up to small-scale trade and exchange of goods. Macfarlane tells us that his grave, now unmarked, bore at the time the epitaph:

'Cudjoe, a Maroon forever free'

London HAZEL WATERS

Daughter of Earth

By AGNES SMEDLEY (London, Virago, 1977). 279pp. £1.95

Daughter of Earth is a semi-autobiographical novel, telling of Marie Rogers' struggle to escape, yet remain true to, the harsh experiences of her early years. The poverty and exploitation that her family endured gave her an instinctive and lasting hatred for the ruling class in all its forms. But later in her life she is puzzled by a New York socialist intellectual referring to 'the system' as responsible for misery and poverty. Abstractions remain alien to her; what is real is what she herself has lived.

The early chapters give a powerful account of her nomadic childhood in the American West in the 1890s, her fight to educate herself, the tensions and brutalities of her family life. Her parents' relationship makes her hate and fear marriage for the humiliating dependence it forces upon women. Although her mother hurts her deeply, her broken, wistful beauty haunts Marie's childhood. Her mother's sister Helen, chief financial support of the household, seems initially to suggest a way out, by remaining unmarried and economically independent. But when Helen turns to prostitution, her freedom becomes double-edged. Money is power: that lesson Marie never for-

gets. But she also sees her aunt's terrible dependence on sexual evaluation, and her eventual destruction.

Marie tries to articulate, most movingly, the particular kind of shame and guilt she herself experiences in sex. Unable to acknowledge her own sexual desire, she is appalled by what she recognizes, after every sexual encounter, as her own complicity. Sexual dependence she dreads above everything. 'When one loves, one is enslaved', she says.

Her struggle to suppress and divert all emotional tenderness becomes most anguished in the context of her own family. After her mother's death, her two vulnerable young brothers become the focus for this conflict. 'I fought with my emotions. I believed only in money, not in love or tenderness', she asserts. But she is paralysed with guilt and misery, when persuaded, by the more sophisticated socialists she later mixes with, that to concern herself with her family is politically naive. She transfers her allegiance to the exiled Indian nationalist movement, and suffers torture and imprisonment for their cause.

The description of her growing involvement with Indian revolutionary politics seemed to me the weakest part of the book, perhaps because it moves away from the sure touchstone of her own experience and becomes slightly rhetorical and idealist. When she tells a friend, 'I am not working for individuals, but for the idea of liberty', the emphasis has shifted from the daily struggles of her own life and into the remoter world of political principles.

But this does not diminish the marvellous, raw power of Agnes Smedley's story. Her writing, like Marie's life, moves between sensuousness and austerity, compassion and bitterness, as she details the sufferings and struggles of all those victimized because of their race, class or sex.

When Marie is a child, her father sees the earth he digs as a source of wonder and magic; her mother sees it as hard and unyielding, like their life. She is the daughter of both her parents: the earth of the imagination, and the earth of labour; the personal, and the political. She becomes a socialist who cannot find a place in the socialism of her own country; a feminist who mistrusts women. Her politics grows out of her life:

> I do not write mere words. I write of human flesh and blood. There is a hatred and a bitterness with roots in experience and conviction. Words cannot erase that experience.

London JANET RÉE

The Economics of European Imperialism

By ALAN HODGART (London, Edward Arnold, 1977). 88pp. £2.25

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in the relationship, both economic and political, between industrially developed countries and the Third World. One of the possible ways of characterizing this relationship is through the concept of 'imperialism'.

The term imperialism has had a long history, and has fluctuated between possessing favourable and unfavourable connotations. Today, largely as a result of both American and British foreign policy, the term refers to a relationship of oppression and exploitation of the people of the Third World.

The major aim of theories of imperialism, since the writings of Hobson, has in general been to explain why capitalist countries have needed to expand into non-capitalist areas. In attempting to explain this expansion many writers, both Marxist and non-Marxists, have dealt with economic factors. It is this interest in the economic level that Hodgart deals with in his book. Hence we are not given an account of imperialism either in the late nineteenth century or the present day. Instead we are supplied with an overview of the major economic theories of imperialism, beginning with Marx and Hobson, through Lenin, Luxemburg and Schumpeter, and ending with Keynes and the neo-Marxists.

It appears, from Hodgart's exposition, that there are three major debates within the literature. First, is imperialism synonymous with capitalism? Secondly, does imperialism occur because of economic or political tendencies within the advanced industrial countries? Thirdly, what are the effects of imperialism for both advanced industrial countries and the Third World? Because of his specific interest in the economic theories of imperialism, only the first question is dealt with adequately. Not only is his treatment of two of these questions inadequate, but furthermore his discussion of various theories is unrepresentative. There are two clear examples of this. First, his account of Marx's theory gives the impression of Marx as an economic reductionist, i.e. that for Marx political and ideological factors were unimportant. Secondly, his account of the present-day neo-marxist theories omits any discussion of the important theoretical developments in the political and social aspects of imperialism. For example, capitalist penetration has resulted in an increasing percentage of the population becoming, not unemployed, but underemployed. This phenomenon has led writers such as Amin and Obregon to develop the concept of marginality — a concept which attempts to explain the political, social and ideological results emanating from this economic occurrence.

Because Hodgart has very specific interests in the book and because he fails to deal with theories of imperialism which consider

other factors as well as economic ones, his book will be of only limited use to readers in this area.

Polytechnic of North London GEOFF HUNT

Women's Liberation in China

By CLAUDIE BROYELLE (Sussex, Harvester Press, 1977). 174pp. cloth £8.95, paper £2.95

This book is primarily a record of the trip to China of twelve women from Paris and the French provinces who, although various in background, were all activists in the women's movement in France. What enhances the book's interest — for women particularly — is that it contains Claudie Broyelle's own reflections on and analysis of the women's movement in Europe and North America. That few reporters bother to take this second step and reflect and analyse the implications of a trip to China for their own levels of consciousness and activities has always seemed a pity to me, as this can be as illuminating as the facts of the trip itself. Claudie Broyelle links the personal and the political in a very readable book.

Within sections devoted to social labour, housework, children, the family and sexuality she records in a lively manner, and often verbatim, the history and description of each institution visited. To attempt to summarize her themes and arguments, some limited to the revolutionary experience of China and others universal in scope is necessarily to undermine their subtlety and complexity.

It is no accident that Claudie Broyelle begins with a discussion of the role of women in social production for she firmly believes that this was the route actually taken by Chinese women towards their liberation. She notes that today the vast majority of women in China are in some form of social production, but as the case studies reveal this has not come about smoothly. They have struggled to have the value of their work recognized by men and for equal opportunities and remuneration. The author concludes that while their participation in social production has not in itself liberated them, it has nevertheless been a decisive factor in arousing an awareness of their oppression, and in the socialization of their rebellion.

Broyelle sees the solutions to most other problems facing women, entailing as they do the total redefinition of the sexual division of labour, as resting on the abilities of revolutionaries everywhere to destroy the family as an economic and political unit. For example, the socialization of housework necessarily implies the denial of the economic role of the family and the creation of new social institutions to reorganize and collectivize domestic services. The transformation of the mother-child relationship and the sexual relations

between men and women both entail a reappraisal of the socio-economic functions of the family along with the role of the state and educational institutions. The author suggests that the fact that 'the family' has been destroyed in China and yet survives should cause us to re-examine what we refer to by the term 'family' and the common slogan of the 'left': 'Abolish the family'. 'Nothing', she says, 'can be understood about the new Chinese family if it is seen outside the social transformation in which it is situated; if the place that each of its members is beginning to take in society is overlooked.' The book is rightfully a plea against separating social phenomena such as the family, sexuality and others from the social relations and the material basis underlying them.

The group had originally aimed to chart the course of the Chinese revolution from the point of view of women's liberation in order to try and identify the effects of one on the other. Not surprisingly this is too large an aim for such a short visit, but Claudie Broyelle is obviously familiar with Marxist theory and the practice of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, and can soundly contextualize her experiences. Indeed the comparisons and analysis are the strengths of the book. Perhaps what is missing is a historical account of the interaction between feminism and socialism, both at the economic and the ideological levels. Without this there is a tendency to idealize the present. I believe that this tendency is counteracted in a second book, the result of a much longer working-period in Peking, and the differing moods of the two books may well make for an interesting comparison.

Women's Liberation in China comes most alive when the author relates her experiences in China to a broader discussion of women and production, reproduction, the family and sexuality under capitalism and in the transition to socialism. Her questions are pertinent and her analysis, born of both Marxist theory and her particular experience in the French women's movement, makes it a valuable contribution to the continuing discussion of the issues surrounding the political struggle to end the subordination of women.

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ELISABETH CROLL

Books received

This listing does not preclude subsequent publication of reviews.

Afro-Arab relations in the new world order. By E.C. Chibwe. London, Julian Friedmann, 1977. Cloth £7.95

The age of capital 1848-1875. By E.J. Hobsbawm. London, Abacus, 1977. Paper £3.50

As others see us. By Ann Hurman. London, Edward Arnold, 1977. Paper £2.95

The attack on higher education — where does it come from? A reply to the 'Gould report'. London, Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy, 1977. 25p

Ballards of under-development. By Taban Lo Liyong. Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1976. Paper £1.80

Black Odyssey: the Afro-American ordeal in slavery. By Nathan Irvin Huggins. New York, Pantheon, 1977. Cloth $8.95

Blacks and criminal justice. By Charles E. Owens and Jimmy Bell. Lexington, Mass., Lexington Books, 1977. Cloth £8.50

'But I wouldn't want my wife to work here . . .': a study of migrant women in Melbourne industry. Fitzroy, Victoria, Centre for Urban Research and Action, 1975

The chosen race: Christians and the rise of the new fascism. Dublin, S.C.M. Publications, February 1978. 30p

Claim in time: a study of the time limit rules for claiming social security benefits. By Martin Partington. London, Frances Pinter, 1978. Cloth £7.95, paper £2.95

Class and power in a Punjabi village. By Saghir Ahmad. New York, Monthly Review Press, 1977. Cloth £5.30

Distribution of personal wealth in Britain. By A.B. Atkinson and A.J. Harrison. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978. Cloth £10.50

The end of prosperity: the American economy in the 1970s. By Harry Magdoff and Paul M. Sweezy. New York, Monthly Review Press, 1977. Cloth £4.75

Enoch Powell and the Powellites. By Douglas E. Schoen. London, Macmillan, 1977. Cloth £10.00

For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf. By Ntozake Shange. London, Eyre Methuen, 1978. Cloth £3.95, paper £1.50

The forest Indians in Stroessner's Paraguay: survival or extinction? By Richard Arens. London, Survival International, January 1978. Paper

Fort Grunwick. By George Ward. London, Temple Smith, 1977. Paper £1.75

Full employment — priority. Edited by Michael Barratt Brown and

others. Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 1978. Cloth £5.00, paper £1.95

The future in the present: selected writings. By C.L.R. James. London, Allison & Busby, 1977. Cloth £6.50, paper £2.95

Grunwick. By Joe Rogaly. Harmondsworth, 1977. Paper 80p

Guatemala: unnatural disaster. By Roger Plant. London, Latin America Bureau, 1978. Paper £1.50

'Human Rights' and American foreign policy. By Noam Chomsky. Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 1978. Cloth £4.50, paper £1.25

Humanity and society: a world history. By Kenneth Neill Cameron. New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973. Paper £3.85

L'immigration dans la zone de Fos (1973-1974). By Pierre Raymond. 1977

Industrial health and safety in Hong Kong. By Martin Palmer. London, Hong Kong Research Project, 1977. Paper 65p

Lenin and the cultural revolution. By Carmen Claudin-Urondo. Hassocks, Sussex, Harvester Press, 1977. Cloth £4.95

Nkrumah and the Ghana revolution. By C.L.R. James. London, Allison and Busby, 1977. Cloth £6.50, paper £2.95

Nomads of the Sahel. By Patrick Marnham. London, Minority Rights Group, July 1977. Paper 75p

Partnership in black and white. By Roswith Gerloff et al. London, Methodist Home Mission, April 1977. Paper 35p

Passport to truth: true facets of apartheid. By Georg von Konrat. Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1975. Paper £3.40

People in paper chains. Oxford, Birmingham Community Development Project, 1977. Paper 80p

Puerto Ricans in the US: the struggle for freedom. Edited by Catarino Garza. New York, Pathfinder Press, 1977. Cloth £3.80, paper 80p

Racial discrimination. By Hernán Santa Cruz. New York, United Nations, 1977. Paper $13.00

Racism and economics. By W. Abraham Jerome. Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1973. Cloth £2.50

The Rastafarians: the Dreadlocks of Jamaica. By Leonard E. Barrett. Kingston, Jamaica, Sangster/Heinemann, 1977. Paper £2.90

Richard Wrights's hero: the faces of a rebel-victim. By Katherine Fishburn. Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow Press, 1977. Cloth £7.65

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Supplying repression. By Michael T. Klare. New York, the Field Foundation, 1977. Paper

Survey research practice. By Gerald Hoinville and Roger Jowell. London, Heinemann, 1978. Cloth £6.50, paper £2.50

Tamariki Maori. By Jane Ritchie. Hamilton, University of Waikato, 1977. Paper.

The following recent back issues of *Race & Class* are available from the Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Road, London N1

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