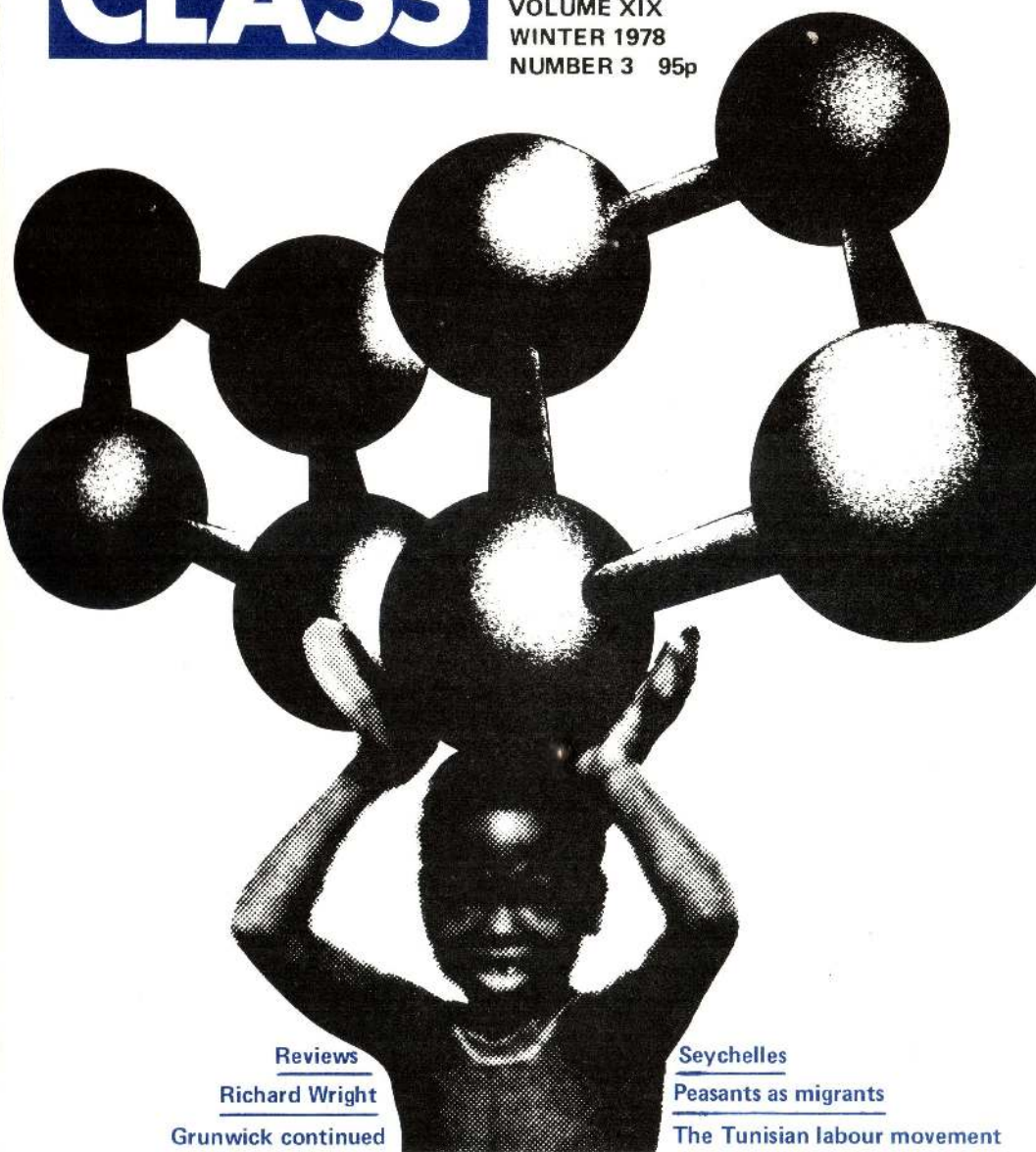


# RACE & CLASS

A JOURNAL  
FOR BLACK AND  
THIRD WORLD  
LIBERATION

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Reviews

Richard Wright

Grunwick continued

Seychelles

Peasants as migrants

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# RACE & CLASS

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# The emergent Marxism of Richard Wright's ideology

## *INTRODUCTION: THE LIBERAL CRITIQUE*

The Second World War seemed to push the historical and social significance of Blacks to a critical moment in American life and thought. The democratic ideology of the war effort; the mobilization of Blacks into the work force and the armed services; the immediate parallel between European Jews and American Blacks; the political and economic role which the United States began to assume in world arenas, all these appeared to compel some resolution of what American radicals had for some time termed 'the Negro Problem'. Even before the War it had become obvious (as we shall see) that events had forced the transformation of Black people beyond the capacity of American society to sustain an older system of oppression. The Depression which began in the late 1920s had torn away from them the illusion of an ever-progressing prosperity which had been the promise of industrial organization. The movement of radical trade union organizations which was a reaction to that Depression had involved Blacks at unparalleled levels.[1] In the face of these fundamental changes in American social structure, government officials and representatives of industry turned to American intellectuals for answers, plans, analysis and programmes. For the latter their concern was how to compromise the promise of American liberal ideology with the reality of Black American life.

Among those intellectuals from whom rationalizations might be

sought were the social scientists. These men and women had grown immeasurably in influence during the war, producing national character analyses (on, for example, Japan, Germany, Soviet Russia), manning intelligence operations and engaging in all kinds of propaganda.[2] Importantly, however, many of them were second and third generation Americans. There were too few American social scientists with the kinds of sophistication required to tackle the problematics of racial amelioration. In the 1930s American intellectuals had too often evidenced signs of liberal guilt, regional arrogance or worse in dealing with race. They were simply too aggressive towards, too ambitious for and too insensitive to American traditions. One looked elsewhere for a more mature, objective voice.\*

The Carnegie Foundation chose Gunnar Myrdal, a Swede, to study definitively the social history of Blacks and to rationalize the future. Beginning their research in 1937, Myrdal and his staff (which included Ralph Bunche, later to become the most prominent Black American diplomat) produced the mammoth study, *An American Dilemma* (1944). The study would dominate the field of 'race relations' in America for decades. It concluded that the social choice was an immediate one: between Blacks being an American 'liability' or 'opportunity'; that it was necessary and possible to reform the American structure and its institutions in such a way as to destroy the 'caste' system which had enveloped Blacks.\*\* The issue was social equality and integration, the alternative, a restive, volatile 'fifth column'. Their study was consequently a challenge. They spoke for the liberal, deliberate and responsible American intelligentsia, yet they avoided fundamental social criticism. Their demons were racism

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\*An interesting example of the calculus involved is that of the Carnegie Corporation: 'The direction of such a comprehensive study of the Negro in America, as the Board thereupon authorized, was a serious question. There was no lack of competent scholars in the United States who were deeply interested in the problem and had already devoted themselves to its study, but the whole question had been for nearly a hundred years so charged with emotion that it appeared wise to seek as the responsible head of the undertaking someone who could approach his task with a fresh mind, uninfluenced by traditional attitudes or by earlier conclusions, and it was therefore decided to "import" a general director ... and since the emotional factor affects the Negroes no less than the whites, the search was limited to countries of high intellectual and scholarly standards but with no background or traditions of imperialism which might lessen the confidence of the Negroes in the United States as to the complete impartiality of the study and the validity of its findings. Under these limitations, the obvious places to look were Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries'. F.P. Kneppel's foreword to Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944), p. vi.

\*\*Myrdal warned: '... few white Americans ... have ever thought of the fact that, if America had joined the League of Nations, American Negroes could, and certainly would, have taken their cases before international tribunal back in the 'twenties. Some versatile Negro protest leaders are, however, familiar with the thought. After this War there is bound to be an international apparatus for appeal by oppressed minority groups.' Ibid., p. 1019. Myrdal was, of course, absolutely correct. See William Patterson, *The Man Who Cried Genocide* (1971).



and ignorance and decidedly not the economic system[3] — an ironic development given the fact that Myrdal was an economist.

Among American Black intellectuals and scholars there too were few who could be trusted to remain within the limits of liberal thinking. The caste nature of American historical formation had allowed for the development of a rather small Black academic intelligentsia. Within this intellectual class parochialism was the dominant characteristic; a result both of its base of financial support as well as its delimited institutional mobility.[4] Those who had gained some prominence as intellectuals tended towards the left, ideologically. W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson (the two leading figures of the time) were clearly radical; and others, like E. Franklin Frazier, the sociologist, had had radical backgrounds. Consequently, few of them were invited to play significant roles in the national redevelopment of the post-War period. Even their words had to be muted by censorship (DuBois and Robeson both were subject to either criminal or government action). They could not be trusted to limit themselves to the problem of racial integration.

The arts were perhaps one of the few arenas in which Black expression was articulated. In music and writing one could find statements by Black men and women about the condition of Black people in America. Genius found its way in the work of people like Billie Holiday ('Strange Fruit' was her statement on lynching), Duke Ellington, Theodore Ward, Katherine Dunham and scores of others.

However, the most important spokesmen of the Black intelligentsia — as social analysts and propagandists — were the writers: Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Margaret Walker, Chester Himes, Ann Petry, William Gardner Smith and James Baldwin, to name the more prominent. It is they who brought Black consciousness of racism and capitalism to the fore. In their work are declarations of the terms upon which liberation is to be achieved; the nature of American society, and the critical sensibilities of survival. We turn to them to rediscover the dreams, frustrations and most importantly the social history of the post-War period.

In 1968 Erik Erikson, a Harvard psychoanalyst, had this to say about what he called 'this sudden emergence of national awareness of the position of the Negro in the United States'. He wrote:

... statements of Negro authors are couched in terms so negative that they at first suggest an absence of identity or, at any rate, the almost total prevalence of negative identity elements. There is DuBois' classical statement on the Negro's inaudibility ...

From DuBois's *inaudible* Negro there is only one step to Baldwin's and Ellison's very titles suggesting invisibility, namelessness, *facelessness* ... I would tend to interpret the desperate yet determined preoccupation with invisibility on the part of these creative men as a supremely active and powerful demand to be

heard and seen, recognized and faced as *individuals with a choice* rather than as men marked by what is all too superficially *visible*, namely, their color ...

The widespread preoccupation with identity, therefore, may be seen not only as a symptom of 'alienation' but also as a corrective trend in historical evolution. It may be for this reason that revolutionary writers and writers from national and ethnic minority groups ... have become the artistic spokesmen and prophets of identity confusion.[5]

Erikson, of course, was attempting to comment on the phenomena of the ghetto rebellions which took place in the early 1960s and the militant civil rights movement which had been their concomitant. He had, however, turned to writers of the earlier generation — the post-War period. Erikson is a man to whom some attention must be paid. After Sigmund Freud, he is perhaps the figure who has contributed most to bringing to American consciousness the issue of identity crises. The intellectual force of his writing on such figures as Adolf Hitler, Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi has spawned a whole new method of writing history — psychohistory.

Erikson, like Myrdal, reflected a liberal approach to the study of the social conditions and consciousness of American Blacks. He postulated, from a Freudian perspective, that the critical force of Black literature is individual personality rather than the impact of social and historical processes. Racial consciousness was pathogenic by its very nature. What eluded Erikson is that racial consciousness consists of a social ideology — the emergent, historical consciousness of an oppressed people of their oppression.\* His analysis of Black literature was consequently both paradigmatically and politically naive. He was misinformed by the philosophical and analytical preoccupations of Freudianism and his own historical dilettantism. He had no notion that what he was observing was a political event, one involving the American literary establishment's use of its power and resources to select the 'authentic' voice of Black literature.[6] By transposing the prominence of Ellison and Baldwin as writers into a psychological drama, he was transforming an activity of political and ideological significance into an existential and ahistorical tragedy.

The missing figure in Erikson's survey of Black literature is Richard Wright. The missing problematic is Black social ideology and political theory. Having avoided both subjects, Erikson reflected the acute distortions which have characterized the encounter between liberal American social thought and Black consciousness. Just as Myrdal, earlier, had circumvented a systemic critique by focussing on the issue of structural reform, so Erikson diminished the meaning of

\*Erikson's comments on European Jews in Nazi concentration camps are, paradoxically, a specific commentary on this phenomenon. See his *Insight and Responsibility* (1964), especially the lecture entitled 'Identity and the Oppressedness in our Time'.



Black literature. The substance and nature of Black literature for Erikson was reduced to its most manifest and apparent form: the identity-confusion of the writer.

### THE SOCIAL IDEOLOGIES OF BLACK LITERATURE

American Black literature of the 1940s and 1950s was dominated by four or five figures. First there was Richard Wright, who had authored *Uncle Tom's Children* (1936) and the autobiography *Black Boy* (1937) before publishing his phenomenal novel *Native Son* in 1940. (Later, in 1953, Wright would publish *The Outsider*; in 1954, *Savage Holiday*; and finally, in 1958, *The Long Dream*.) [7] After Wright had come Chester Himes. Though Himes was a contemporary of Wright's and a fellow exile in Europe, he has always been considered a 'student' of Wright's. [8] In any case, Himes' works of the period of interest here were *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1946), *Lonely Crusade* (1947), *Cast the First Stone* (1952), *The Third Generation* (1954) and *The Primitive* (1955).

➤ In historical order, the third writer, Ralph Ellison, was taken to be Wright's peer if not his superior. He had published only one novel, however, *The Invisible Man*, in 1952. Fourteen years later Ellison published his second book, *Shadow and Act*, a collection of critical essays. The fourth significant writer in the post-War period was James Baldwin. Baldwin published first *Go Tell It on the Mountain* in 1953, and then in close order a collection of social and literary essays, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), and a second novel, *Giovanni's Room* (1956). This, then, was the Black literary pantheon of the post-War generation: Wright, Himes, Ellison and Baldwin.

Now it would be a rather orthodox inquiry to investigate the nature and character of the social realities these writers comprehended by a comparative analysis of their novels and other works. One would of course begin with Wright's *Native Son* and proceed to contrast its Marxist vision with the anti-Marxist cynicism and confusion found in Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and *Lonely Crusade*. Wright in the 1930s and 1940s passionately believed in the historical truth of a racially united proletariat, as much as Himes, at roughly the same historical point, was disgusted by the hypocrisy he discovered in American Communism. [9]

Again, if we were to follow the usual procedure, we would then introduce Ellison. Ellison chastized Wright for writing sociology rather than creating art. [10] Like Himes, Ellison had no patience with Marxism or Communism; and like Himes, Ellison could not deliver his characters from a morass of alienation, self-pity and self-destruction. Wright, who never responded to American social ideology on its own terms, was succeeded by writers whose works were consciously

delimited and defined by precisely the myths of racism.

Just as Wright had played on the mock terrors of racial inferiority, miscegenation and Black rapists in order to diminish their objective significance, Ellison and Himes found it necessary to exaggerate the importance of these fantasies in order to substantiate their own existential horrors. Both Himes and Ellison pitched their protagonists into murderous fantasies and self-destructive pity; their heroes wandered to the logical conclusion of existentialism.[11]

Baldwin, to whom we would turn next, would be a beast of an entirely different coloration. For despite whatever other elements of Wright's social reality they might reject, Baldwin's predecessors had sustained the critical tension of a racial problematic in their writing. Baldwin, however, would emulate what one critic, Robert Bone, has termed the 'raceless' Black novelists, for example, Willard Motley (*Knock on Any Door*) and Ann Petry (*Country Place* and *The Street*) where characters were 'incidentally' Black. In Baldwin's social vision, identity is ultimately and fundamentally sexual. The most cruel and ugly necessity of life is coming to terms with one's homosexuality, heterosexuality or bisexuality. Baldwin saw the first two as psychologically crippling, the third — bisexuality — as the elusive wholeness that Freud so desperately pursued.

The above would thus constitute the outlines of such a study. We would have begun with an author who possessed, for the moment, a clear, definitive, ideological position and proceed to discover the gradual but persistent subversion of that vision, in the work of others, by Black rage and frustration until it was consumed in privatism, individualism and sexual obsession. We would then explain it all by referring to American social history after the War which was characterized by the compromise of the American left by Stalinism, and then by McCarthyism; by the continuing betrayal of democratic promise and ideology to racism, and, finally, the deterioration of Black material welfare through institutional and structural discrimination. Most of us, certainly, could be quite satisfied with such a reconstruction.

Yet, this approach contains two fundamental and critical weaknesses. First it presumes that Wright's contributions to Marxism were purely interpretative. Wright is posited as another example of the naive Black seduced into a temporary and debilitating dependency by the dogma of American Communism. The script ends with the Party betraying the man (see *The God that Failed* or the newly-published *American Hunger*). This version of Wright's experience and of his importance is the apparent result of a misinterpretation — one which confuses Wright's object, in his treatment of Marxism, with that of his literary successors. With respect to American Marxism, Wright, Himes and Ellison were never addressing the same subject.

Basically, Wright's literary contemporaries — particularly Himes



and Ellison — differed with him in their understanding of social and historical analysis. Wright proceeded from an understanding of historical development:

Without adequate preparation, the Negro of the Western world lives, in one life, many lifetimes ... The Negro, though born in the Western world, is not quite of it; due to policies of racial exclusion, his is the story of two cultures; the dying culture in which he happens to be born, and the culture into which he is trying to enter — a culture which has, for him, not quite yet come into being; and it is up the shaky ladder of all the intervening stages between these two cultures that Negro life must climb.[12]

Ellison, Himes and Baldwin did not. They were empiricists. While Wright could begin to comprehend the contradictions internal to the American Communist movement\* and still imagine the potential emergence of the American (white) working class into a radical and anti-racist proletariat, the others could not. Instead of coming to grips with Marxist thought, they preferred to direct their attentions to critiques of the *behaviour* of Communist activists and white workers. They did not recognize the identity between Black and white workers which inspired Wright:

...my contact with the labor movement and its ideology made me see Bigger clearly and feel what he meant.

I made the discovery that Bigger Thomas was not black all the time; he was white, too, and there were literally millions of him, everywhere ...

...the environment supplies the instrumentalities through which the organism expresses itself, and if that environment is warped or tranquil, the mode and manner of behavior will be affected toward deadlocking tensions or orderly fulfillment and satisfaction.[13]

Thus to oppose Wright to Ellison, Himes and Baldwin as a pro-Marxist writer is to fix Wright, the American Communist movement and American social history into rather superficial and monochromatic moulds.

This approach abstracts political processes into debates on the function of the novel. It also mistakes fundamentally different political commitments for the natural developments of a Black

---

\*In 1939, on the occasion of the non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, Wright had written: 'The rightness or wrongness of a given set of tactical actions by the Communist Party does not strike me as being of any great ultimate importance ... It takes a more integral order of feeling to accept what is happening in Europe from the angle of the USSR ... the ones who ... are contemptuously referred to as the "faithful" are rebels against the limits of life, the limits of experience as they know it.' Fabre, op. cit., p. 193. Also, see Wright's violent attack on Lenin and Leninism in *The Outsider* (1965), pp. 354-5 and 363-5.

literary tradition (what Bone calls the 'Wright school' or Gayle calls 'American naturalism'). The differences between Wright and Himes, Ellison, Baldwin and their lesser known contemporaries, are understood routinely as those between the founder of a literary movement and those that follow. Wright, presumably, was jealous of his preeminence, and the others envious of him. For example, Webb makes much of Ellison's persistent denials that Wright influenced the writing or structure of *The Invisible Man*. There is also Baldwin's declaration of parricide.[14] Such, indeed, was not the case except on the most superficial and technical levels of their disagreements. The more true nature and extent of the differences between writers can be demonstrated most readily by the fact that while Wright retained a commitment to social movements long after he left the American Communist Party (see Wright's treatment of the mass movement in the Gold Coast, the CPP and Nkrumah in his *Black Power*; and his introduction to George Padmore's *PanAfricanism or Communism?*), the others have restricted themselves to literary and social critiques.

Both the premises of Wright as political dupe and Wright as literary progenitor, however, seriously distort the character of the period which concerns us here. And though the two phenomena are related developments, they are not of the same order of importance analytically. The second is, indeed, a consequence of the first. For this reason it is the first presumption — that Richard Wright was a pedestrian Marxist — which will now be addressed in detail.

### WRIGHT'S SOCIAL THEORY

Wright, in having constructed the character of Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*, has been attributed with a variety of achievements, intents and concerns. Addison Gayle, echoing many of his critical predecessors, argues that Wright created the archetypal stereotype of the Black man, thus releasing American consciousness from that particular beast of burden.[15] Elsewhere one finds *Native Son* understood as 'a complement of that monstrous legend it was written to destroy. Bigger is Uncle Tom's descendant, flesh of his flesh, exactly opposite a portrait';[16] as a study in the psychology of the outcast;[17] and as a statement of the human predicament.[18] In other words, Wright's early work has been characterized by a variety of critics along a continuum ranging between a racially specific protest to a universal declaration. It might be useful, however, to add another and quite different dimension to *Native Son* — a dimension found in Wright's own consciousness of the work.

In 1944, upon his formal declaration of leave from the American Communist Party (the break occurred in 1942), Wright made a



number of his other concerns quite clear. Some of them had to do with the reasons he first became a part of American radicalism.

It was not the economics of Communism, nor the great power of trade unions, nor the excitement of underground politics that claimed me; my attention was caught by the similarity of the experience of workers in other lands, by the possibility of uniting scattered but kindred people into a whole ... here at last, in the realm of revolutionary expression, Negro experience could find a home, a functioning value and role.[19]

Marxist propaganda suggested to him that Blacks need not be alone in their struggle for liberation and dignity. The spectre of a world proletariat, united and strong, Black and white fascinated Wright.

Before that evening of his intellectual conversion he had looked upon the Party as a white man's organization and therefore something to be distrusted, especially in its pretensions concerning Blacks. More important, until that moment he had dismissed as a personal fantasy, as a painful, frustrating dream, the organization of the poor and oppressed. Again, on that same evening — his first visit to a John Reed Club — Wright commented, 'I was meeting men and women whom I should know for decades to come, who were to form the first sustained friendships in my life.' [20] He had discovered not merely an important, historical vista but someone with whom to share it.

Still, beyond the social vision of Marxism and the fraternity of American Communism, Wright's decision to become a part of this movement was motivated by one other element: the opportunity to transform himself from 'passive' victim to active advocate.

Here, then, was something that I could do, reveal, say. The Communists, I felt, had oversimplified the experience of those whom they sought to lead. In their efforts to recruit masses, they had missed the meaning of the lives of the masses, had conceived of people in too abstract a manner. I would try to put some of that meaning back, I would tell Communists how common people felt, and I would tell common people of the self-sacrifice of the Communists who strove for unity among them.[21]

Wright perceived his task as providing to the movement a language and images which would give meaning to the abstracted proletariat of Party ideology. This complex of motives — vision, fraternity and task — might seem sufficient to explain to the readers of *Uncle Tom's Children*, *Lawd Today* and *Native Son*, Wright's sociological and political preoccupations in his early works. Yet Wright, as we shall see, was to have a very different experience which provided other and very different themes for the last of these three works.

Wright had entered the Party naive of its history, its factionalism and its purgative vocabulary.[22] As we have seen, he had not been

convinced earlier of the sincerity of American Communists. This is somewhat surprising given the enormous vitality of the Party's 'Negro work' at the time, work which included the defence of the Scottsboro boys; the confrontation with conservative Black organizations; the organizing of Unemployed Councils and Tenant Leagues; the development of the Black Belt Thesis on self-determination and the organizing of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights and, on the international level, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers.[23] Though he was then a hospital worker, he had identified himself as a writer, and as a writer, he was categorized by those in the Party's ranks as an 'intellectual'. This meant that Wright was to be subjected to the diffidence shown to intellectuals, but, more significantly among his Black comrades, that he was also to be held in suspicion for 'petit-bourgeois tendencies' — i.e., selfish interests — and worse: Trotskyism. The result was inevitable:

Successive disillusionments had transformed his original enthusiastic and total dedication into wariness. His individualism was against him; he was at the mercy of leaders like Oliver Law and Harry Haywood, ostracized from unit 205 by certain black comrades and even denigrated ...[24]

Invited to the Party trial of another Black Party member (one upon whose early experience in the South Wright had based his short story, 'Big Boy Leaves Home'), Wright realized that the trial was also meant for someone else:

The blindness of their limited lives — lives truncated and impoverished by the oppression they had suffered long before they had ever heard of Communism — made them think that I was with their enemies. American life had so corrupted their consciousness that they were unable to recognize their friends when they saw them. I know that if they had held state power I should have been declared guilty of treason ...[25]

He recognized among his Black co-workers an anger dammed up to the level of destruction of self. It was not an ideology which lay at the base of their need to physically violate errant comrades. Their dogmatism was an enveloping shield against ego-cide. Their conformity was a symptom of their desperate and collective need for each other. Wright would write later: 'They're blind ... Their enemies have blinded them with too much oppression.'[26]

This, then, is the crisis which informed the development of Bigger Thomas. *Native Son* was the result of Wright's resolve to have his say, his revision of American Marxism as it emerged from the lives and practices of American Communists:

I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo; and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other



words to tell, to march, to fight, to create a sense of the hunger for life that gnaws in us all, to keep alive in our hearts a sense of the inexpressibly human.[27]

In *Native Son*, Wright sought to display a more authentic, more historical, more precise image of the proletariat to which the Party had committed itself. He had begun this task in *Lawd Today* and it came to fruition in the form of Bigger Thomas. Wright, hesitant at wrestling with Marxism on theoretical terms, pursued his critique of American left ideology in his own terms: the novel. Bigger Thomas' lack of class consciousness — more precisely the odyssey of his development of consciousness — is deliberate and purposive. This was not simply a literary device, but a means of coming to grips with the abstraction and romanticization of the proletariat which had infected western Communist ideology.

Marxist thought, of course, had been concerned with the proletariat for more than a century. In fact, the working class was realized in a number of distinctly different ways in the Marxist tradition. Philosophically, the proletariat was the historical subject (Lukacs); historically, the proletariat was the revolutionary class emergent from capitalist society (Marx, Lenin); politically, it was the oppressed producing class of bourgeois society. For Marxian socialists, the aroused working class of capitalist society, confronting the ruling class, was necessary for the historical transformation to socialist society.

It was further understood that class consciousness was indispensable to the success of the proletariat in its class struggle with the bourgeoisie. But whether that class consciousness was to be a result of the intensifying contradictions and oppression of the capitalist mode of production; or the effect of a vanguard party of professional revolutionaries; or the final consequence of what might be initially trade unionist (economic) struggles, was unresolved. These were a few of the several fundamental issues which had served to divide Marxists.

Such was the theoretical situation in the movement, both domestically and internationally, after the Bolsheviks gained control of the Russian revolution in late 1917. The Bolshevik movement had achieved more than national political power. It was a movement which had also come to dominate the international movement, organizationally, structurally and theoretically. The astounding success of the Lenin-led party in Russia had facilitated the eclipse of the historical interpretation of the reformist Second International. Once again, as in the years of the domination of the Second International by German Marxists, there was an authoritative basis for ideological conformity. At the beginning of the Bolsheviks' hegemony there had been the ideological authority of Lenin, Bukharin and Trotsky. Now it was Stalin and Dimitroff. The

Comintern, the political instrument of the Third International, enforced a strict discipline. Whatever the character of the proletariat, and class consciousness, their natures would be made clear through the Party as the agency of the Comintern.[28]

At the time of Wright's sojourn in the Party (1934-42), the primary focus of the movement in western Europe and the United States was the defeat of fascism. It was a fundamental tenet of Party work that fascism was an instrument of the ruling class designed to meet the crisis of world capitalism embodied in the Depression. As such, fascism as an ideology was presumed to be alien to the working class. Earl Browder, as general secretary of the American Communist Party, had made this position abundantly clear in reports, speeches and articles during the late 1930s.[29] As the official voice of the American Party Browder had argued that the struggle of the movement was pre-eminently a political one:

What is the message that this powerful voice of the Communist Party is giving to America? First of all, it is the message of the need for the great mass of the people, the workers and farmers, to organize for their own protection.[30]

Browder's strategy was a simple one: 'The growth of the Communist Party is the greatest guarantee against reaction and fascism'.[31]

Browder's leadership had positioned the Party in support of the New Deal and Roosevelt's administration under the presumption that American workers were not ready to confront the issue of socialism. [32] In effect, the Party pursued the contradictory aims of reform and revolution. This was in part a consequence, as Wilhelm Reich had pointed out with respect to the German Communist movement during the Weimar Republic, of failing to distinguish between the abstraction of class consciousness and its specific, historical form.[33] Just as critically, however, the Party was committed by the instructions of the Comintern to a united front with its class enemies.

For Wright the question of the consciousness of workers and consequently that of political organization was more complex. It involved — as he was to write in defence of *Native Son* — 'the dark and hidden places of the human personality'.[34] In the essay, 'How "Bigger" Was Born', Wright had been more explicit:

the civilization which had given birth to Bigger contained no spiritual sustenance, had created no culture which could hold and claim his allegiance and faith, had sensitized him and had left him stranded, a free agent to roam the streets of our cities, a hot and whirling vortex of undisciplined and unchannelized impulses.

...I was fascinated by the similarity of the emotional tensions of Bigger in America and Bigger in Nazi Germany and Bigger in Old Russia. All Bigger Thomases, white and black, felt tense, afraid,



nervous, hysterical, and restless ... certain modern experiences were creating types of personalities whose existence ignored racial and national lines of demarcation ...[35]

Wright was attempting to come to terms with the psychological consequence of an historical condition of which the leadership in the Communist movement was only vaguely aware. Wright was insisting on the necessity for understanding the working classes in their own terms. He was concerned with the ability of proletarian masses to reproduce themselves spiritually and culturally. If they could no longer recreate the social ideologies which had sustained them, it would not be possible for them to fulfil the historical role that Marxian theory assigned them. Moreover, the fragmentation of personality, social relations and ideology that Wright observed and recreated was so total that its political and historical implications seriously challenged the presumptions of the Communist movement:

I felt that Bigger, an American product, a native son of this land, carried within him the potentialities of either Communism or Fascism ... Whether he'll follow some gaudy, hysterical leader who'll promise rashly to fill the void in him, or whether he'll come to an understanding with the millions of his kindred fellow workers under trade-unions or revolutionary guidance depends upon the future drift of events in America. But ... Bigger Thomas, conditioned as his organism is, will not become an ardent, or even a luke-warm, supporter of the *status quo*. [36]

He realized that no political movement which presumed the progressive character of the working class would succeed.

Wright's novel, subsequently, was a refutation of radical dogma from the vantage point of Black experience. He sought first to recreate that experience, and in so doing to force a confrontation between it and socialist ideology. Bigger Thomas' character was specific to the historical experience of Blacks in the United States, but his nature was proletarian, that is world-historical. When Wright gave the consciousness of Bigger Thomas a nationalist character, he was addressing himself to both those aspects of his creation. He wrote that he was 'confronted with that part of him that was dual in aspect ... a part of *all* Negroes and *all* whites'. [37] If the American revolutionary movement could not come to terms with the *appeals* of fascism, then it could not begin to understand the immediate *nature* of the working class. \* He agreed with Marx that capitalism as a form

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\*In April 1940, Wright had written to Gold, 'If I should follow Ben Davis's advice and write of Negroes through the lens of how the Party views them in terms of political theory, I'd abandon the Bigger Thomases. I'd be tacitly admitting that they are lost to us, that fascism will triumph because it alone can enlist the allegiance of those millions whom capitalism has crushed and maimed.' Fabre, op. cit., pp. 185-6.

of organization led to the destruction of social consciousness founded on non-capitalist social orders. He did not accept, however, the notion that this process led to a new ideological synthesis. The truer result, the observed result, was 'a world that existed on a plane of animal sensation alone'.[38] The Nazi movement succeeded because it offered in the stead of an existential terror, a new, unambiguous social order, 'the implicit, almost unconscious, or preconscious assumptions and ideals upon which whole nations and races act and live'.[39]

Yet Wright's analysis did not end there. He had something more to say about the nature of revolutionary action. His analysis both underscored the absolute character of revolutionary commitment and also spoke to Marxian class analysis.

I remember reading a passage in a book dealing with old Russia which said: 'We must be ready to make endless sacrifices if we are to be able to overthrow the Czar' ... Actions and feelings of men ten thousand miles from home helped me to understand the moods and impulses of those walking the streets of Chicago and Dixie.[40]

Wright recognized in his Bigger Thomases the desperation which was the precondition for the making of total and violent revolutionary commitments. He understood those commitments to be less ones of choice than of compulsion. The more total the degradation of the human being, the more total the reaction — 'the need for a whole life and acted out of that need'.[41]

He also refused to dismiss the Bigger Thomases as lumpen proletariat or to distinguish them from the proletariat. In *Native Son* he actually anticipated a thesis on violence and the lumpen proletariat which would become better known later through the work of Frantz Fanon. For Wright, the violence of the lumpen proletariat was not only an objective force of revolution; violence could not be separated out from the formation of consciousness.

'I didn't want to kill!' Bigger shouted. 'But what I killed for, I am.'[42]

What, precisely, the Bigger Thomases would kill for, Wright could not answer. He had stated his thesis and it was now left to the 'future drift of events' to make that determination, i.e., the capacity of the American radical movement to develop a critical political theory. This, of course, was not to be the case.[43]

Wright had emerged from the Depression with a clear and powerful image of American society and world history. With the writing of *Uncle Tom's Children* and *Native Son* he had extracted from the misery of poverty and imminent social collapse an understanding of a systemic integration in which racism was a secondary, residual phenomenon. He had no reason to doubt that the disintegration of



the capitalist world was really a promise of liberation — a promise which enveloped the whole of humanity. Yet he possessed few illusions about this process of disintegration. He knew, in social terms, even in human terms, that the immediate costs would be unparalleled violence, brutality and vengeance. At first he hoped that this historical transformation would be surgical in its order. He believed in a conscious, deliberate and magnanimous workers' movement. By the time he was writing *Native Son*, however, this ordered revolution had been replaced by a chaos consisting of the collective action of a brutalized human force. The destruction of capitalism would come at the hands of the brute social force it had itself created. Still, Wright saw this brutalized mass as the *promise* of the future. Unlike Marx, Wright anticipated barbarism *and* socialism.

Yet when the violence did come, it had none of the redemptive qualities expected of it. The War salvaged world capitalism rather than destroyed it. Indeed, the War transformed the hypocrisy of a racist America and an imperialist western Europe into the phenomenology of Divinely protected social orders. To the extent that Wright's life, his work, his very existence constituted an indictment of this social order — its embodied opposition, he was he longer of significance ... he had become inaudible, nameless and invisible. His fate was to share in the collective experience of his people, to be once again betrayed by history.

Wright, of course, found such a condition intolerable. His response was to renounce the intellectual and political quest for historical truth which had marked his Marxist years. He found it no longer possible to preserve a sense, an expectation of social justice. He retreated into a philosophical phantasmagoria of existentialism and Freudianism; and, finally, the familiar bounds of racial order. It was, however, an uneasy truce since he now possessed all the unhappy instincts of the renegade. Such was the odyssey of a man who would lay claim to both the western tradition of conquest and destruction and its antithesis, national liberation.



It is, granted, unusual to attempt to do political theory in these terms. The more common vocabulary of social theory consists of abstractions like power, authority, political order, nation-states, and the like. Political analysts much prefer the sweep of institutions, organizations, social forces and social movements. There is, however, an inherent danger in approaching social history in these terms. That danger is the tendency to interpret human experience in formal, objectified categories. Systemic grammar infers law-like relationships between people as the objects of activity. Consciousness, that extraordinary vessel of everyday life, becomes a mechanistic reflex. This is

a serious misconception. It provides us with no firm basis for comprehending the oppositions which are a primary aspect of our day-to-day lives.

Wright and his contemporaries in the development of Black literature serve to remind us of the range of contradictions which have made up Black consciousness. They could not be consistently anything either as individuals or an intellectual movement. And even those moments of their most brilliant insights were accompanied by the pain of discovery. They could only construct tenuous settlements with history at best — small closets of peace. In this particular way only they were precisely what Erikson had made of them, prophets and spokesmen of identity confusion. And the American Black people for whom they prophesied and spoke gathered their strength for one more assault on western society. The historical results were, of course, the urban uprisings of the 1960s. But even in these there was that ambivalence making them more an outraged demand than an act of confident authority.

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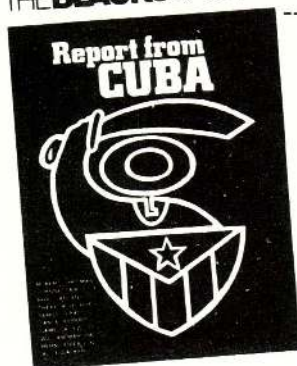
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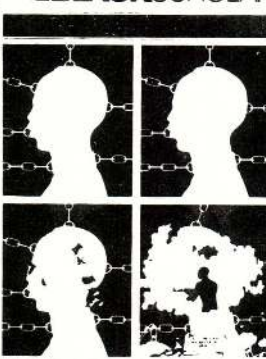


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M. ANIS ALAM

## Science and imperialism

### WHAT IS SCIENCE\*

Science, said Mao, is the crystallization of knowledge developed through man's struggle for production. Throughout history people have developed science by collecting, systematizing, analysing and generalizing their struggles for increased production.[1] But increasingly, and especially from the seventeenth century onwards, the word 'science' and the expression 'scientific knowledge' have come to be reserved for that body of knowledge and skills whose development is associated with the names of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Boyle, Harvey, Faraday, Darwin, Einstein, Heisenberg, Bohr and Rutherford. When one thinks of science, one thinks of steam engines, electricity, atom bombs, computers, sputniks and genetic engineering. This science has developed along with the rise of capitalism. In fact the title 'science' has been exclusively reserved for that knowledge and those skills which can be systematized and incorporated into the academic culture of the ruling capitalist class.[2] All other knowledge and skills that belonged to the popular culture, and which have accumulated over centuries of careful and selective observations and practice, have been denigrated and labelled unscientific. Third world countries came into contact with this science through imperialist expansion, plunder and colonization. With the establishment of

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\*By science I mean not only the so-called pure sciences (physics, chemistry, biology), but also applied sciences (agriculture, medicine, engineering).

imperial hegemony over the third world by the end of the nineteenth century, popular local knowledge and skills suffered an eclipse. They were declared unscientific and denied encouragement and support of any kind by the imperialist rulers. Even after gaining formal independence the rulers in the third world continue to follow the imperialist in denying state patronage to local popular knowledge and skills. Thus allopathy, which relies heavily on synthetic drugs, is considered scientific, is taught in universities, is practised in government hospitals and receives research grants from the state. On the other hand, plant medicine, which relies on vast stores of knowledge accumulated over centuries of observation and practice is declared unscientific and is condemned by the medical profession. It does not command government support for research and development. Numerous other examples can be given from the popular practice of agriculture, animal husbandry and weather forecasting. Thus in the third world it is only capitalist science which receives state support, and is taught and researched in universities, laboratories and other establishments. The title of science in the third world is reserved for that knowledge and those skills which can be incorporated and integrated into the capitalist relations of production, and which is of value and use to the world capitalist system.

According to Scheffler: 'A fundamental feature of science is its ideal of objectivity, an ideal that subjects all scientific statements to the test of impartial criteria, recognising no authority of persons in the realm of cognition.'<sup>[3]</sup> Sharing the same viewpoint, J. Monod, the French biologist and Nobel laureate, writes: 'Science rests upon a strictly objective approach to the analysis and interpretation of the universe, including Man himself and the human societies. Science ignores and must ignore value judgements.'<sup>[4]</sup> But this commonly-held view has come to be increasingly challenged, even by bourgeois philosophers of science. In 1962 Thomas Kuhn launched his controversial attack on the conventional wisdom, popularized in the writings of Popper, that science progresses cumulatively towards an ever greater understanding of physical reality, step by step, guided by logic and the appeal to a theory-independent empirical basis. Kuhn divides science into two types: normal science and revolutionary science. Normal science consists of the articulation of the paradigm\* to which the scientific community is committed. 'Scientific revolutions are non-cumulative episodes in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one.'<sup>[5]</sup> As subjective, personal and partisan considerations play a decisive role in the acceptance of a new paradigm, science can hardly be said to

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\*Paradigms are the generally accepted fundamental beliefs about a particular phenomenon which describe its nature, explain experimental relations and define further areas of investigation which can proceed without challenging the basic hypotheses.



be an objective, neutral and value-free activity. In fact the meta-physical position of the scientist affects the form that scientific theories take — they are 'regulative principles' which reflect a view of nature.

In western Europe, ever since the seventeenth century, the central paradigm of science has been provided by the *mechanical philosophy*. In the seventeenth century it achieved a clear-cut victory over its rival Aristotelian, magical animistic, alchemical, hermiticist and other images of nature — for this philosophy alone offered the prospect of, and served to legitimate, human (read rising capitalist class) control of and power over the natural world. It was the mechanical philosophy alone that declared the entire universe to be in principle raw material for the benefit of *homo faber* (read capitalist class). Conversely, it was the mechanical philosophy's image of nature that capitalist relations of production in turn reinforced — and eventually established — as the only rational image of nature. This mechanical philosophy has remained unaltered in its essence, although its form has changed with time. It is the basis of present day 'physicalist reductionism' which attempts to 'explain' all phenomena, whether physical, biological or human and social, in terms of physics and chemistry, i.e. to reduce all phenomena to their 'basic' physical properties in terms of the properties of the 'ultimate' constituents of matter, the so-called elementary particles. All phenomena which do not fit into the physical-reductionist scheme are regarded as unnecessary irritants, which scientists could do without. Thus J. Monod writes: 'We might say, the existence of a living being [an organism with sentience, perception, cognition, consciousness] is a constant challenge and a menace to the postulate of objectivity' — a line of reasoning which would make living beings a challenge and a menace to the development of science.[6] This science, then, with its objectivity and rationality, both represents and reflects the point of view of the ruling capitalist class which regards the natural world as consisting of raw material, in part immensely complex raw material (namely working-class men and women), but raw material nonetheless, to be used in production for its own benefit.

Science is now firmly and overwhelmingly integrated into the capitalist relations of production. Practically all science is now done under capitalist state patronage or in the laboratories run by big capitalist firms. Most science is goal oriented, being geared to two broad areas of social existence: *production* and *social control*. Production science is science for profit, science for the accumulation of capital, and is concerned with developing industrial capacity, exploiting new materials and increasing profitability. Social control science takes two forms: it concerns itself with either defence against potential external enemies, or the development of techniques for the pacification, manipulation and control of the indigenous population.

If one examines the annual 'science budgets' of Britain or the United States, one finds that between 75 and 90 per cent of the annual total comes under these two heads (77 per cent in Britain in 1974-5, 80 per cent in the US in the fiscal year 1975).[7] A recent book, *The Technology of Political Control*, documents the development of the science of control in great detail.[8] It is industrialized, militarized and bureaucratized science which is being developed and practised in the advanced capitalist countries, and it is this science which third world countries are being encouraged to adopt.

### THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF THE SCIENTIST

Scientists are projected as egalitarian, tolerant, open minded, pre-disposed to collaborate across intimidating social barriers, emotionally detached and supremely rational. Not only is their community a model of international cooperation, but also of internal political organization.[9] This image of scientists as competent experts, who are politically neutral, helps the ruling class to institute new forms of oppression and exploitation (or old forms under new conditions), and to make them acceptable in the name of science and under the authority of scientists. William Shockley, 1956 Nobel Prize winner, co-inventor of the transistor, now uses his expertise (in transistor physics!) to further the cause of modern genetic racism in the US. The Pentagon was able to obtain the services of forty-seven of the most eminent American scientists, including five Nobel laureates in physics (E.P. Wigner, M. Gellmann, C. Townes, L. Alvarez and D. Glaser) to work for the Institute of Defence Analysis (IDA). They were organized in the Jason division.[10] Every summer (from 1960 onwards) they met to devise methods to wound, mutilate or kill the maximum number of civilians without employing strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. The committee finally came up with the 'electronic battlefield', which consists of night-vision systems, acoustical detectors, emitters and receivers linked with computers located far away from the battlefield which could trigger bombing raids with laser guided bombs, pellet bombs and defoliants. This electronic battlefield was deployed extensively in Indo China to mutilate, maim and kill.

### SCIENCE, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND THE RISE OF IMPERIALISM

The movement of capitalism and science are related, though much too intimately for that relationship to be expressed in simple terms of cause and effect. It can, however, be said that at the beginning of the period the economic factor was dominant. It was the



conditions of the rise of capitalism that made that of experimental science possible and necessary. Towards the end of the period the reverse effect was beginning to be felt. The practical successes of science were already contributing to the next great technical advance — the Industrial Revolution.[11]

Behind our Industrial Revolution there lies this concentration on the colonial and 'underdeveloped' markets overseas, the successful battle to deny them to anyone else ... Our industrial economy grew out of our commerce, and especially our commerce with the underdeveloped world ... [12]

In the early period of the Industrial Revolution most of the inventions and devices were not the result of conscious application of science, but were the work of people engaged in struggles for improvements in production techniques. But this situation changed drastically in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Braverman describes this beautifully:

Science is the last — and after labour the most important — social property to be turned into an adjunct of capital. The story of its conversion from the province of amateurs, 'philosophers', tinkerers and seekers of knowledge to its present highly organised and lavishly financed state is largely the story of its incorporation into the capitalist firm and subsidiary organisations. At first science costs the capitalist nothing, since he merely exploits the accumulated knowledge of the physical sciences, but later the capitalist systematically organises and harnesses science, paying for scientific education, research, laboratories, etc., out of the huge surplus social product which either belongs to him or which the capitalist class as a whole controls in the form of tax revenue. A formerly relatively free-floating social endeavour is integrated into production and the market.[13]

From being a 'generalized social product incidental to production', science became 'capitalist property at the very centre of production'.

The old epoch of industry gave way to the new during the last decades of the nineteenth century chiefly as a result of advances in four fields: electricity, steel, coal-petroleum and the internal combustion engine. Scientific research along theoretical lines played a sufficiently important role in these areas to demonstrate to the capitalist class, and especially to the giant corporate entities then coming into being, its importance as a means of furthering the accumulation of capital. This was true particularly of the electrical industry which was entirely the product of nineteenth century science, and the chemical industry based upon the synthetic products of coal and oil. German capitalists, late-comers in the industrialization of Europe, were the first to incorporate science into industry

(from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards). Their model was to be followed by the rest of the capitalist world and by the end of the nineteenth century scientific industrial research was firmly established. The corporate research laboratories of the United States of America coincided more or less with the era of monopoly capitalism.

The era in which science was beginning to be incorporated into capitalist production overlaps considerably with the rise of modern imperialism. In the period 1876 to 1914 six European capitalist nations increased their colonial possessions by about twenty-five million square kilometres, an area which is one and a half times the area of these six countries put together. In 1876 three countries (Germany, the US and Japan) had no colonies of their own. By 1914 these three countries, together with France, which had hardly any colonies in 1876, had a colonial empire stretching over an area of more than fourteen million square kilometres.[14] The impetus for this imperial expansion was the need to divide the entire globe into captive markets and to capture sources of raw materials for rapidly rising industrial production, made possible by new scientific discoveries.

In the nineteenth century Britain was the largest imperialist power. Her colonial empire was spread over the five seas. In order to establish and maintain British naval and imperial hegemony through a global network of harbours, the sciences of meteorology, oceanography and naval astronomy were developed. Similarly, the agricultural and mineral sciences were developed greatly to exploit the agricultural and mineral resources of the colonies. From the eighteenth century onwards there had been a large scale expansion of plantation industries in the colonies. New plants and crops were introduced into entirely different surroundings. New soil conditions, new pests, new weather conditions and their mutual relationships were from the very beginning studied scientifically.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the exploitation of the colonies entered a second phase. In addition to the exploitation by the mercantile and industrial capital of the colonial powers, the colonies were subjected to exploitation by finance capital as well. A large number of companies dealing with the transport, mining and plantation industries began to invest in the colonies. In India the largest and economically the most profitable investments, in railways, shipping and tea plantations, grew very rapidly after the 1870s, necessitating the development of scientific and technical expertise. The colonial government therefore encouraged the development of scientific and technical education, and research institutions were established on a considerable scale. By the end of the nineteenth century there were 170 colleges affiliated to five universities at Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Lahore and Delhi. These included several



medical and engineering colleges. The colonial government also established ten scientific services in India (the Meteorological Reporter, the Inspector General of the Civil Veterinary Department, the Director of the Botanical Survey of India, the Reporter on Economic Products, the Inspector General of Agriculture, the Director General of Archaeology, the Chief Inspector of Mines, the Surveyor General, the Inspector General of Forests and the Director of the Geological Survey).[15] In addition, two agencies were exclusively created in British India (the Indian Advisory Committee (IAC) of the British Royal Society and the Board of Scientific Advice of the Government of India) for the specific purpose of using 'science, including medical science to explore and exploit the geography and natural resources of the colonies in general and the Indian sub-continent in particular, for the benefit of British commerce'.[16]

A colonial official has commented that the huge empire of Britain was kept together 'in part by concession, in part by force, and in part by the *constant intervention of new scientific forces to deal with the growing difficulties of imperial rule*'.[17]

### SCIENCE FOR UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Today it is the local education system which sorts out and selects the best brains to be given the necessary basic training. Indeed, third world countries have received a large amount of aid, in the form of equipment, finance, technical assistance and training programmes, to enable them to set up sophisticated training and research institutes in the sciences. Advisers from the advanced capitalist countries ensure that the standards of research and teaching are equivalent to those of the metropolitan institutions. The best students are then brought over to the advanced capitalist countries for further training in highly-specialized fields, after which, of course, they seem over-qualified for their own little underdeveloped countries. In 1970 there were more than 100,000 foreign students in the USA, 50,000 in West Germany, and about the same number in France, from the third world. Various capitalist countries offered more than 100,000 scholarships to students from the third world.

Many of those who return to their native countries become frustrated through the lack of the institutional facilities for higher research they had become accustomed to during their stay abroad. As a result they return to the advanced capitalist countries. Those who remain introduce and reinforce an elitist, hierarchical and expert science which perpetuates and reproduces the same exploitative system as before.

Take the case of India. In 1947 there were eighteen universities with about 300,000 students. In addition there were a number of

well-established institutes undertaking research in agriculture, medicine, geology, mining, etc. India also possessed a number of institutions such as the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Indian Science Congress (1914), the Indian Academy of Sciences (1934), the Indian Institute of Sciences (1935) and the Indian Council of Industrial and Scientific Research (CISR) founded in 1942.

In the twenty-five years following independence, over seventy new universities and research laboratories have been established. The number of students has shot up to nearly three million. Nine institutes of technology have been set up, modelled upon the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In addition specialized research institutes, like the Forest Research Institute, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Atomic Energy Establishment, Indian Cancer Institute, National laboratories and central research institutes, have been established to undertake research on food, drugs and technology. In 1973 Indian universities awarded more than 1,800 Ph.Ds, 35,000 M.Sc.s and 80,000 B.Sc.s in various branches of science.[18] India has been spending 2.6 per cent of her GNP, and more than 23 per cent of all public expenditure, on education. In 1972 India spent more than 200,000m rupees\* on research and development. In 1973 1,174,300 scientists and engineers were working in India, of whom 96,954 were engaged in research and development. The expenditure on education has increased from 6,104m in 1965 to 13,575m in 1973.[19] Indian science has certainly developed, and is impressive by any standard. Indian scientists have been awarded Nobel prizes and their articles are published by practically every scientific journal in the capitalist world; they have successfully exploded an atomic device and they have sent a satellite into the sky. Every year several local, regional and international conferences, congresses and symposia are held in India. Indian scientists are found all over the world in the most prestigious universities and research institutes.

But who has benefited from all this expenditure and development? Has it reduced poverty, malnutrition, disease and unemployment in the country? Let us look at the statistics. In a recent study Romesh Diwan shows that 'the percentage of rural people below the minimum standard of living has significantly gone up from 38 per cent of the total population in 1960-61 to 54 per cent in 1968-69'. [20] And yet, according to a spokesman of the Congress Party, which ruled India from 1947 until its defeat in 1977, 'there has been more scientific progress and achievements in India during the last ten years 1965-75 than perhaps in the previous century'. [21] Whom did this progress benefit? According to Sau this period also saw a phenomenal rise in the fortunes of Indian big business. He finds that medium and large

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\*1 US dollar = about nine Indian rupees.



public limited companies had more than doubled their assets in the eight years 1967/8-1974/5. The bigger companies did even better. The total assets of twenty celebrated big business houses (Birlas, Tatas, Muftlals, etc) increased from Rs20,800m to Rs35,150m in six years (1966/7-1972/3), and then to Rs51,100m by 1975/6, i.e. an increase of Rs15,950m in just three years. The profits of medium and large companies rose from Rs6,600m to Rs16,800m in eight years (1966/7-1974/5) — a compound growth rate of 11.33 per cent for gross profit. The twenty big business houses increased their gross profit in three years (1972/3-1975/6) by a stupendous 57.8 per cent, from Rs3,800m to Rs6,000m! The biggest two, Tatas and Birlas, registered the maximum increase. Tatas increased its assets from Rs3,750m in 1963/4 to Rs9,746m in 1975/6; Birlas from Rs2,829m to Rs10,646m during the same period.\*

The development of prestigious branches of science like nuclear, particle, solid state and space physics, though of little value to the average Indian, has been of great benefit to the Indian ruling classes. A sophisticated armaments industry has been developed — enabling the ruling class to pursue an expansionist foreign policy. The explosion of an atomic device and the launching of a space satellite in the middle of the 1970s has brought further prestige to the Indian bourgeoisie and helped divert attention from their internal exploitative policies. In short, although the development of science in India has not relieved the misery of the average Indian, it has greatly increased the fortunes of the ruling classes (big business, rich landowners, and the middle class). It has also provided them with new and more efficient instruments of repression.

But the biggest beneficiaries of all have been the imperialist countries themselves. For, if hitherto third world countries have been the source of raw materials and of unskilled and semi-skilled manpower, today they are also being used as a huge reservoir of cheap scientific labour power. In fact — as we would expect — the closer the links and the greater the 'aid' between a third world country and the metropolis, the greater the drain of scientific and technical manpower. Thus the Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore are the largest suppliers (per number of emigrants per thousand of population) of qualified scientific manpower to the US. They are also the largest recipients of US aid (scientific and technical expertise, grants and military assistance). A recent United Nations study has documented the benefits to the US from this inflow of scientists, engineers, physicians and surgeons. The study shows that during the decade 1961-71, over 53,000 scientists, engineers, physicians and surgeons came to the US from the third world. Indeed, during 1965-70, of the net addition to the employment of scientists and engineers

\*Throughout the whole of this period wages remained more or less stagnant.

in the US, more than 20 per cent came from abroad, and in recent years these immigrants are coming increasingly from the underdeveloped third world countries. The study further points out that in 1970 alone the amount added to the US national income through the services of immigrant scientists comes to about US\$3.7 billion. In comparison the figure for the US official development assistance to the third world in the same year was US\$3.1 billion. It may be interesting to note that the contribution to immigrant scientific manpower is equal to 0.3 per cent of the US gross domestic product, nearly 14 per cent of total US expenditure on research and development, and about 39 per cent of US current expenditure on higher education.[23]

#### SCIENTIFIC AGRICULTURE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Hunger and insufficient agricultural production are two of the chronic problems facing most of the third world. The advanced capitalist countries have encouraged third world countries to adopt their scientific methods and practices in agriculture. It is claimed that by doing so they could increase their agricultural production considerably. But before examining the benefits to third world countries of the adoption of scientific agricultural practices, let us look at the consequences of scientific agriculture in one of the earliest capitalist countries, the United Kingdom. In his book *Energy and Food Production*, [24] Gerald Leach examines the requirements of food production in societies ranging from the most primitive to modern capitalist industrial states. Leach exposes some of the absurdities of the food production system in Britain. He finds that the application of science does not increase food production per acre, though it does increase productivity per man by the use of agricultural machinery, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It is extremely wasteful of energy in the form of fossil fuels (used for raw materials for fertilizers, pesticides and as fuel for agricultural machinery). If the third world countries were to use the scientific agricultural practices of advanced capitalist countries like the UK, they would consume their entire yearly energy supply on growing food alone. And if they wanted to use the scientific processing techniques used in the UK, they would also require an amount of energy equal to 40 per cent of the entire energy consumption of the whole world. Leach further claims that the *proportion of the work-time spent in feeding the UK population is comparable to that in primitive communities using pre-capitalist science.*

On the face of it, it looks as if the use of scientific methods enables one farmer to feed sixty or more people. But these methods depend on, have allowed, and indeed largely caused, vast social changes —



including urbanization and the factory system — which have put large distances between the fields and the mouths in every sense, and greatly swelled the ranks of non-farm workers in food production and distribution. Thus in the UK one worker is able to feed only 14-16 people — a figure which is typical of the middle to upper range for pre-industrial farming, when one counts the working time actually spent in production.

Although scientific agricultural practices are of questionable value, even in the UK and the US, still there has been a conscious effort to foster them in the third world. The big American foundations (Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie), along with the US Department of Agriculture and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), have been responsible for the so-called revolution in agriculture — the Green Revolution — that some third world countries have experienced since the 1960s. In fact the high-yielding varieties of wheat and maize were developed at the International Wheat and Maize Improvement Centre in Mexico, which was set up by the Rockefeller Foundation with American expertise and capital. Similarly, an improved variety of rice was developed at the International Rice Research Institute, set up jointly by the Rockefeller and the Ford Foundations at Manila in 1962. And at these centres were schooled the agronomists and economists who would help 'mould the rural economy into forms compatible with technological change and social stability'.[25]

From 1952 onwards — under a technical collaboration programme with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Ministry of Education — USAID provided the experts, equipment and capital required to set up nine agricultural universities.\* Six American universities (Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Pennsylvania and Tennessee) collaborated in this project, sending 300 of their staff members to serve in India, and training about a thousand Indians in the agricultural sciences.[26] The programme, which was phased out in 1972-3, introduced capitalist agricultural practices to India in a big way, and vastly increased the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and agricultural machinery. The class of big landlords and rich peasants who alone could make use of these expensive techniques were able to reduce farm labour and increase their profits greatly. Consequently, inequalities in the Indian rural areas have increased, rural unemployment has risen, but the increase in agricultural yields has not been better than that of the prescientific agricultural era. According to Dasgupta, in the ten-year period 1966-76 'the rate of

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\*These universities are: Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana; Haryana Agricultural University, Nissar; University of Udaipur; UP Agricultural University, Patnagar; MP University of Agriculture, Jabalpur; Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology; Maharashtra University of Agriculture and Technology; Mysore University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore; Andhra Pradesh.

growth in food production, at 2.5 per cent a year was less than the pre-high yielding varieties period with a less advanced technology'.[27]

The officials of the agribusiness monopolies, however, acknowledge the role played by the US government in opening up third world markets for them. One executive of a giant fertilizer company told a Congressional Committee:

I must emphasise that there would be scarcely any investment if it were not for the infrastructure, the education, the training and the support provided by our [US government] aid programme. We certainly would not be in India and very few investors would be in any of the underdeveloped countries were it not for our efforts at economic assistance.[28]

By the 1960s the World Bank entered the field on the premise that what the underdeveloped world needed was agriculture. And what agriculture needed was science. And science could be bought from the firms that sold it — agribusiness firms, multinational corporations — at a price. The World Bank provided the money. In the period 1964-8 it lent \$872m to third world agriculture — roughly the same sum that it had loaned in the entire 1948-63 period. Its lending rose again precipitously to US\$3.1 billion in 1969-73. And in 1973-4 alone credits amounted to US\$956m, plus \$294m extended to agricultural industries. McNamara, the Bank's President, promised to commit \$7 billion more for agriculture in the third world for the period 1976-80. Lending also rose in relative terms. In 1974-5 agricultural lending was about 40 per cent of total lending, as against 15 per cent in 1964-8, and 23 per cent in 1969-73.[29]

Thus, the massive financing provided by the World Bank and directed towards schemes which facilitate the use of (advanced) large-scale scientific methods in agriculture, develops a fertile and highly profitable field for agribusiness to operate in and creates a ready-made market for its products. But, as we have seen in the case of India, use of these methods increases unemployment and inequality without increasing the amount of food produced. Moreover, such technologies are wasteful of energy (which most of the third world is deficient in) and increase dependence on the advanced capitalist countries for the very techniques which impoverish third world countries still further. Traditional ways of planting, fertilizing, harvesting and caring for the earth are replaced by the use of expensive imported chemical products. And the use of these products has in turn exhausted and impoverished the soil.\*

The lesser beneficiaries of the World Bank's largesse are a handful of rich landowners in the third world. But the greater beneficiaries are

\*For example, some side effects of high-yielding varieties which use increased amounts of water and fertilizer have been the devastation caused by waterlogging, salinity and the development of new weeds and pests.



the makers of farm equipment, fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. The World Bank might as well have handed over its money to the multinational corporations direct and saved third world countries from further distortions in their economies and further ransoms on their future.

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## Publications

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## M'hamed Ali and the Tunisian labour movement

In the history of the modern Maghreb, M'hamed Ali, whom the Tunisians consider the founding father of their still influential trade union movement, is a unique personality. He lived during the formative years of Tunisian nationalism. As an eclectic personality he reflected, as he shaped, the trends and forces which converged in Tunisia during the early twentieth century. His first known political activity — on behalf of the anti-colonial resistance in Tripolitania — brought him in direct contact with the pan-Islamic movement which spear-headed early anti-imperialist resistance in the Moslem world; it also placed him in contact with the non-territorial, universalist trends which have marked Arab nationalist movements. In the 1920s, when Tunisian nationalism was being transformed into a mass movement, M'hamed Ali played a key role in creating a national federation of workers independent of the French CGT (*Confédération générale du travail*). As such, he became a central figure in the rivalries and polemics between nationalists and socialists in colonial Tunisia — a phenomenon which greatly shaped the ideological premises of Tunisian nationalism. Finally, as a member of the young, progressive wing of the Destour Party, M'hamed Ali belonged to that generation of youthful, often rural, and generally radical nationalists who later founded the Neo-Destour Party and led Tunisia to independence.

Given M'hamed Ali's importance in Maghreb history, one would expect to find a great deal of available material and a broad agreement on the nature of the labour organization which he

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founded, and his role in it. But information on him remains scanty. We know little of his life before and after 1924-5 when he was instrumental in founding the CGTT (*Confédération générale des travailleurs tunisiens*). No writings can be directly traced to him although we do have, in the press and archives, some quotations or excerpts from speeches attributed to him. The major source of information is a detailed and remarkably analytical account of the CGTT organizing efforts by his friend and fellow activist Tahar Haddad.[1] Yet what is known about him has recently stirred controversy, reviving the polemics of the 1920s between nationalists and socialists in colonial Tunisia.

The passions that he aroused and the tensions that he represented are still unresolved in present-day Tunisia. These tensions are reflected in perennial strains such as the one between nationalist demands for conformity and working-class need for class struggle. While both socialists and nationalists view him as a remarkable figure, old rivals, like the Marxist internationalist Dr Ahmed Ben Milad, still view him with suspicion and try to cast doubt on his central role as a catalyzer of labour struggle on the Tunisian scene of the 1920s, while his syndicalist comrade Jean-Paul Finidori affirms M'hamed Ali's political and revolutionary contribution to Tunisian trade unionism.[2]

The adventurous, and at times clandestine, life of Mohammed Ben Ali Ben Mokhtar Al-Ghaffani, alias Dr M'hamed Ali Al-Hammi, alias Titon, popularly remembered as M'hamed Ali, has undoubtedly contributed to the development of controversy. It is not possible, for example, to confirm the exact nature of his relationship to Enver Pasha (leader of the Union and Progress movement in the Ottoman Empire), nor the jobs he held in Tripolitania during the Italian-Turkish war (1911-12), nor the extent of the education that he received in Germany in the early 1920s, nor the time or place of his death several years later.

The obscurities concerning his life and the controversies surrounding his politics belong largely to his social and political milieu. His date of birth is in question because he was born in a rural community where communal solidarity took precedence over individual identities, and where births and deaths were for remembrances rather than recording. Moreover, as in the rest of the colonies, it was common for families to say that a boy was younger than he really was in order to assure him a longer term of employment. Similarly, the lack of information on his life and activities in Germany is an early testimony to the anonymity of the migrant worker in Europe. He died in exile, a working man, killed in an automobile accident on an uncertain day. The time and place of his death, his birthdate and schooling, patriots and scholars would later try to research, and would encounter enough difficulties to dispute with each other.

He was most probably born in the late 1880s, as Moncef Dellagi



argues,[3] or at the latest in 1891, as M. Martin suggests,[4] in Al-Hamma, an impoverished village in southern Tunisia (Gabès). Its meagre resources, consisting of date palms and a few carpet-weavers, have traditionally forced its hard-working people to migrate to the coastal cities in search of a livelihood. There they enjoy a considerable reputation as dockers and construction workers. The image of these migrants as sober, straightforward and loyal workers has accounted for their popularity with the Tunisian and colonial bourgeoisie whom they have served as porters, guards, chauffeurs and butlers.

After his wife's death M'hamed Ali's father, a poor peasant, brought the young boy to the home of a sister in Tunis. M'hamed Ali studied Arabic at a *kuttab* (Coranic school) and in his first job worked as an errand boy at the central market. He was soon hired as a domestic in the household of the Austrian Consul where he added a smattering of German to his Arabic and French. He also learned to drive an automobile, becoming the Consul's chauffeur. He was therefore one of the rare Tunisians in 1911 who could drive the supply truck which the Young Tunisians sent to aid neighbouring Moslem Tripolitania. In Tripoli he probably drove the staff car of the Turkish officer Enver Pasha and after the defeat he followed his important friend to Constantinople. There he studied Turkish and perfected his Arabic. During the First World War he claimed to have headed the servicing section in the Ottoman army's automobile fleet. After the war he again followed Enver Pasha who fled from Turkey to Germany. M'hamed Ali stayed in Berlin after his mentor had moved on to the Soviet Union.[5] M'hamed Ali himself continued to live in Weimar Germany, making brief trips to Tunisia in 1922 and 1923, before finally returning home in March 1924.

In Germany he moved in socialist and labour union circles, but we lack direct evidence confirming his activities. Haddad recalls him giving moving accounts of the German labour movement and crediting it with having inspired him to struggle for the betterment of Moslem countries. While working in an automobile-aviation factory or on odd jobs, he studied, intermittently, political economy at one of several Free Universities in Berlin between November 1921 and January 1924.\*

On his return to Tunisia in 1924 he associated with young progressive nationalists including Haddad, Tahar Sfar, Mahmoud Bourguiba, Othman Kaak and the Algerian Ahmed Tewfik al-Medani, who later

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\*Whether or not M'hamed Ali had obtained a degree is a matter of controversy. But these were the preoccupations of the French and Tunisian bourgeoisie. For M'hamed Ali it was a matter of politics: he would neither confirm nor deny that he had a degree. In refusing to confirm it, he was denying the importance of status symbols; in laying claim to it (as with the police, for instance), he was using it as an instrument of struggle.

played an important role in his country's struggle for independence. With them M'hamed Ali launched a consumer cooperative movement in June and July 1924 as a means to expand the outreach of the nationalists and to impart new skills and a sense of self-reliance among Tunisians. Before long he was involved in workers' strikes leading to the establishment of the CGTT. His dream of welding into an organic whole the Tunisian nationalist movement, led by the Destour, and a Tunisian labour organization committed to regaining national sovereignty at the same time that it struggled to achieve justice for the working class, ended in a nightmare for him and for the labour leaders who joined him.

Abandoned by the traditional and bourgeois leadership of the Destour, isolated by the French reformist socialists who led European workers in Tunisia, the CGTT became an easy victim of colonial repression. On 26 November 1925, a year after its founding, M'hamed Ali and several of his comrades were banished from Tunisia. They were placed on a ship destined for Naples. The Italian authorities arrested M'hamed Ali soon after his arrival and expelled him from Sicily, so he took off for Turkey where he was also unwelcome. Expelled from Constantinople ten days after his landing, he passed to Port Saïd and then set out for Morocco to join the Riffian revolt of Abdelkrim, but before reaching his destination he was arrested in Tangiers and deported to Egypt.[6] He then lived in Cairo, apparently chauffeuring for an Egyptian Pasha who is said to have dismissed him for refusing to transport a French diplomat. He also supposedly took a course in political economy at a Cairo college.

He died on 10 May 1928, although this date while now accepted by most authorities is also a matter of controversy.[7] In the 1960s the Tunisian government had his body transferred from Arabia to Tunis where his remains received a hero's welcome.

The story of M'hamed Ali's life reflects, above all, the tensions and contradictions of the times in which he lived. He and the trade union movement which he led developed in the formative years of a Tunisian national and social renaissance. This reawakening was produced by the diverse forces which defined the framework and special characteristics of the African, Arab and, particularly, Maghreb response to colonialism and western influences. Hence to understand M'hamed Ali and his contribution to Tunisian nationalism and North African trade unionism, one must examine in historical context the forces which shaped him and his movement during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The most obvious reality was that all political movements in Tunisia developed in a colonial context. Tunisia and other African countries shared many similarities in their colonial encounters. Economic exploitation, racial confrontations between the colonizers and the colonized, the creation of dependent economies, are just



a few of the themes that have been explored elsewhere in detail and need not detain us here, but the specifics of the Tunisian experience merit our attention.\*

As in Morocco the French Protectorate in Tunisia left intact some traditional institutions grouped around the palace. The beylical elite assured some cohesion and continuity in Tunisian social and political life; and its aristocrats formed the nucleus of the country's first nationalist movement. Colonial implantation occurred at a time when Tunisia was undergoing a major movement of reform and the population was highly receptive to change. Modernizing efforts during the pre-Protectorate period, combined with the small size and homogeneity of the country, its traditions of orderly government and the concentration of more than half of the population in the coastal zone or *sahel*, made the settled and partially urbanized population open to western ideas and institutions.

In Tunisia, unlike Morocco, the colonial situation was long and intensive enough to disrupt the old order irrevocably and to encourage the formation of an elite which creatively adopted modernistic values and programmes. Yet it was not so dominant as to destroy in the nineteenth century, as it had done in Algeria, the cultural core of a potentially modern nation. The colonial conquerors did not encounter the prolonged and bloody resistance in Tunisia that they did in Morocco and Algeria. The fierce suppression of the 1864 revolt by the beylical regime and the great famine of 1867 had already sapped the energies of the rural population most likely to resist colonization. Undisturbed or unaided by popular armed rebellion on the scale of Abdelkader's in Algeria, or Abdelkrim's in Morocco, or the Sanusiyya in Libya, those disciples of the reform Prime Minister Khereddin Pasha (1873-77) who did not flee the conquest or face expulsion, encountered the French Protectorate calmly and concentrated on reforms from within. In a modernist reformist way they sought to absorb western influences, while keeping the religious and cultural integrity of Tunisia intact.

By the early twentieth century the Young Tunisians, contemporaries of the Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire, and the first generation of aristocrats educated under the Protectorate, acted almost imperceptibly as mediators between the colonial culture and their own society. They aimed at reawakening Tunisians from their

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\*Tunisia was established as a French Protectorate by the Treaty of Bardo (1881), which, while allowing the Bey to retain his sovereignty, authorized France to occupy Tunisia militarily and to take charge of foreign affairs and finance. Two years later the Convention of La Marsa gave the 'protecting power' effective control of the entire state, although the trappings of beylical suzerainty were retained. A similar arrangement occurred in Morocco in 1912. By contrast, Algeria, occupied by France in 1830, was declared a directly governed colony; traditional Algerian state institutions were systematically destroyed during the fifty years of violent resistance which followed French occupation.

intellectual torpor, ridding them of indolence and fatalism and, in the words of one of them, Mohamed Lasram, liberating them 'from all prejudices that shackle their evolution, destroy their faculties and hold them outside the movement that carries humanity towards progress'.[8] Their weekly, *Le Tunisien* (established in Paris in 1907), developed ideas on state formation. Their *Parti Evolutioniste* (also 1907) sought Franco-Tunisian cooperation within a modern Tunisian state in which all citizens would have equal rights.

This emphasis on equal rights stemmed from the reactions of most Tunisians to the racism which defined relations between them and Europeans. The normal tensions which existed in Tunisian society between classes and the class struggle which might have emerged in a non-colonial setting, were submerged in conflicts over racial issues between the foreign and indigenous communities.

Such a fundamental reality of the colonial environment, wherein race took precedence over class, was continually confirmed by historical events. The Italian invasion of Tripolitania (September 1911), which was then an Ottoman province administered by a governor appointed by the Caliphate, provoked deep emotions among Tunisians and crystallized their discontent into bitterness and fear. Already France had occupied Algeria in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881, and 1882 had witnessed the take-over of Egypt by the British. And now Italy, another European nation with whose citizens they daily brushed hostile shoulders, was attempting to colonize a Moslem neighbour with the collaboration of imperialist France. This development challenged the premises of pan-Islamic propaganda which had raised the hope that the Moslem people be restored to their place in history. Ottoman Turkey, tottering but still reckoned by Moslems as a major power, was the chief instrument of that restoration. The 'Caliphate' — revitalized as an ideological force by the Ottoman ruler Abdelhamid (1876-1908) and used by the Young Turks as a tool of policy — was the symbol of unity and a promise for the future. And now Italy's attack on Turkish power so close to home threatened dreams, shattered lingering hopes and produced nervous disquiet among ordinary Tunisians.

### THE ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE

M'hamed Ali's first known involvement in the anti-colonial struggle grew out of this event. At the time he must have been in his early twenties and worked as a chauffeur in the household of a rich Tunisian. Few other Tunisians were employed as chauffeurs since it was skilled and better-paid work and was therefore dominated by Italians and other Europeans. The Young Tunisians led by Ali Bach Hamba had formed a committee of solidarity with Tripolitania, a



journal *Al-Itihad Al-Islamī* (Islamic Unity) and a medical supply unit. They reportedly recruited M'hamed Ali to drive a truck load of supplies to Tripolitania. Thus he embarked in the autumn of 1911 on a political journey which took him to Tripolitania, Turkey, the Arab Middle East and Germany, introducing him in his formative years to the pan-Islamic, reformist and nationalist currents prevalent in the Ottoman Empire, and subsequently exposing him to socialist milieus in Germany.

In Tunisia the climate produced by the Turko-Italian war led to confrontations between the colonized and the colonial authorities. Among the Tunisians, who were apprehensive and fearful of colonial intent, rumour spread easily of an alleged French plan to confiscate the venerated Moslem cemetery of Djellaz on the outskirts of Tunis. The city's population rose up in protest. The protest led to violence (2 November 1911); the authorities established martial law which officially did not terminate until 1920. A full-scale battle ensued to dislodge the Tunisians from the cemetery, and led to killings and executions. Three months later the accidental killing of a Tunisian child by an Italian trolley-car conductor led to the boycott of the Tunis street-car lines. Trolley-car workers also demanded equal pay for Moslem employees and better treatment for Moslem passengers. The episode marked the entry of Tunisian workers into national politics. The style was suggestive: general national grievances were mixed in and expressed with specific worker demands. The Young Tunisian leaders did not originate the boycott, but they supported it. On 12 March 1912 the police arrested seven of them. Four, including their major leader Ali Bach Hamba, were deported.

The martial law, the repressive measures and the advent of the First World War produced a political lull which lasted until 1919. During the war the ill-structured and divided trade union movement, led by the metropolitan CGT, virtually disappeared. When the war ended Tunisia witnessed a rush of activity.

The period between the two wars (1919-39) was characterized by the growth of widespread social unrest, mass politics and mass mobilization in North Africa. Colonialism had now lasted long enough to have manifested its many contradictions, and the war further accelerated historical processes. European settlement, colonial education and a measure of industrialization and mining favoured by the war had contributed to the weakening of the old indigenous elite in Tunisia. A new proletariat and a new generation of nationalists had begun to emerge.

The Tunisian working class, on whom M'hamed Ali counted so much, felt the tensions and the immediacy of the colonial encounter in a way that few colonized people did outside of the Maghreb. They immediately had to face the problems created by privileged workers from Europe — some 44 000 out of 107 500 salaried workers in

1926 — in their midst.[9] Tunisians had become second ranking workers in their own country. Competition with Europeans was unequal, discrimination in pay scales and wages galled many and racist attitudes of European co-workers could hardly flatter human dignity.

Tahar Haddad's graphic description of the crisis that accompanied social transformations in the inter-war period stands as a stark reminder of the turmoil which western colonialism and capitalism engendered in Tunisia and elsewhere in the Maghreb.

Artisanal production has decreased, numerous professional people have gone bankrupt and they have joined the ranks of the unemployed who in turn are joined by the inhabitants of the southern infertile lands and by members of the tribes who are evicted from their lands by French colonialism. These are convenient circumstances for the grand French capitalists who exploit the mining resources of Tunisia, who construct railroads ... and factories such as limestone and cement works. These capitalists have been able to find by the hundreds, even thousands, an army of unemployed whose numbers increase with the passage of time. Capital recruits only as a function of its needs; it has been able to use the masses for hard labour at low pay, while others, and they are numerous, have to wander on the roads and in the towns, either begging or robbing.[10]

'The sword of colonialism', he added, 'is suspended above all of our heads.' M'hamed Ali too was deeply moved by the backward and miserable condition of Tunisians and in an impassioned outburst during the second day of his trial he described 'the wretched condition of so many of our people who live like animals'. [11] At night he would walk around in the *medina* (old Arab quarter) indignant at the sight of the poor half-starved and semi-naked, sleeping on side-walks receiving from 'heaven its gift of heavy rain' and yet satisfied with their *maktub* (fate) — while 'our leaders' were 'in their fancy beds with their wives, their children and their golden dreams'. [12]

Nevertheless, transformations in Tunisian society resulting from the new order tended to bring Tunisian classes into closer, if superficial, contact. Before the Protectorate, Haddad noted,

important families abhorred labour, and they became high functionaries in the administration or they lived off an annual income from the exploitation of their lands by agricultural labourers. It is with the same disdain that they considered commerce which for them was comparable to manual labour. Commercial activity meant that they would cater to a clientele to whom they would have to be nice ... They found that an unsupportable burden and a bit humiliating. [13]



But the immigration of about 110,000 Europeans into the Protectorate by the turn of the century led the Tunisian aristocrats — at times impoverished by their loss of function and land — to join the ranks of the old merchant families and new self-made people to form a local bourgeoisie. Simultaneously the leaders of the European colony — mostly French — assumed the role of a new aristocracy. The lives of the Tunisian upper crust increasingly became filled with empty forms and ceremonies. Their dominance was significantly reduced; their way of life was threatened. European settlement accentuated this threat and compelled the aristocracy, *cum bourgeoisie*, to seek mass support in the emergent Tunisian working class.

Given these tendencies M'hamed Ali, like Haddad, concluded that conditions in Tunisia were not yet ripe for class struggle or full-fledged social revolution. While accepting the general theory of class struggle, labour union leaders grouped around these two personalities, defended the CGTT's rejection of this concept on grounds that it had little validity in colonial Tunisia. The country was not yet sufficiently industrialized to produce class differentiation of the type that gave rise to revolutionary struggle in Europe. Moreover, the richest Tunisian businessman or land-owner employed at most ten workers in the mid-1920s, while European manufacturers and colons were establishing capitalist enterprises of much larger scale.[14] Since race took precedence over class in defining major cleavages in Protectorate society, it was only natural that those discriminated against — the Tunisians — would form alliances across class lines. But economic differences and social distance between classes made such alliances tenuous and tense.

Haddad recognized that accepting nationalism without class struggle might only postpone a class war. But he asked, 'should the Tunisian, then, start a class war now to avoid a future class struggle?' [15] M'hamed Ali's major concern also was not so much with immediate class struggle, as with getting rid of the Europeans.[16] While M'hamed Ali and his friends did not rule out the possibility of an internal revolutionary conflict in the future — at least Haddad articulated this position — in the organizational sphere M'hamed Ali stressed the need for Tunisians to bury their differences and unite in revolt against foreign domination.

The Tunisian environment of the 1920s accelerated this potential for revolt. New disappointments had accentuated old anger among increasingly large sections of the population. Some 65,000 Tunisians had fought for France during the war and of these 10,900 had died or disappeared. An additional 30,000 had worked on construction brigades in the metropolitan area. Therefore nearly a quarter of the active Tunisian male population had had direct contacts with the metropolis. Their sacrifice, loyalty and service led them to expect rewards from France. Instead they returned home to face unemploy-

ment, high prices caused by inflation and a fiscal system that violated basic social justice. The tax system also hurt the already exploited Tunisians and gave settlers and French capitalists major privileges.

This crisis was exacerbated by major crop failures in post-war Tunisia. The 1919 crop was mediocre and extreme drought ruined the 1920 harvest to the point that it was one of the worst years since the great famine of 1867. 1921 was a bit better, but once again the yields of 1922-4, while larger than that of 1920, produced less grain than needed to feed the population. The government was forced to import wheat at high prices. This pushed workers to clamour for higher wages to keep up with the 29 per cent rise in the cost of living between 1923-24. The post-war economic crisis thus wiped out whatever profits Tunisians had gained during the war.[17] Besides, Tunisian war veterans, like the workers who laboured alongside the Europeans, or the many who unsuccessfully sought work, were no longer ready to accept the status quo that treated them as inferiors.

M'hamed Ali returned to this seething environment in March 1924, after spending nearly 13 years abroad. Aided by militants such as the street-car worker Mokhtar Ayari,[18] who had been wounded in the war, and Jean-Paul Finidori,\* he led the first organized group of Tunisian workers into the mainstream of nationalist politics. Depending on the ideology and leadership of the working class, their entry into politics could have sharpened either the radical or the reactionary edge of the nationalist movement. In the post-war Maghreb the pulls were in both directions and M'hamed Ali's politics and actions reflected the tensions between class-dominated nationalism and working-class socialism in Tunisia. In order to understand the dilemmas and decisions of M'hamed Ali and his comrades, an overview of the interplay between nationalism and socialism is essential.

### *BETWEEN NATIONALISM AND SOCIALISM*

In the 1920s the Tunisian nationalist movement entered a militant phase. The small group of westernizing Young Tunisians were being replaced by a new generation of leaders inclined to cultural nationalism and intent on widening their mass support through the Destour Party which was founded in 1920. Despite the predominance of the traditionalist elements in the Destour, it would be misleading to call the party a conservative monolith. Although the old families of Tunisia supplied 70 per cent of Destour leadership,[19] the party in fact was a portrait of the Tunisian 1920s, a coalition of diverse, not always reconcilable elements. Conservative landowners, modernist

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\*Jean-Paul Finidori was the European communist leader in Tunis in the early 1920s and a close associate of M'hamed Ali.



'ulema and westernized liberals were thrown together with the leaders of the working class, radical reformers, and Paris-educated would-be-revolutionaries.

The Destour was a mass party in the sense that it could claim national support and its leaders used mass protests, or the threat of them, as bargaining counters in their drive to win political concessions from the colonial regime. Yet it did not seek to represent the specific interests of the underprivileged, and used instead the symbols of Islam and past glories to elicit their support.

The rapidly expanding reformed Coranic schools, although initiated in 1908 under modernist inspiration, had nevertheless the predictable effect of reinforcing religious feelings. Increase in literacy and growing interest in social and political issues were accompanied by widespread use of the printing press and a proliferation of journals and tracts. Many of these were devoted to religious and revivalist themes.

The dream of resurrecting a paradise lost, so appealing to many, could have captivated Tunisian nationalism and could have led the working class to embrace a fundamentalist religious movement. For a time, under the leadership of the Destour Party, such a development seemed probable. However, the progressive and liberal trends set by the Young Tunisians and reinforced by a group of young men in the Destour who formed the nucleus of the first indigenous trade union federation rendered unlikely a withdrawal into the womb of revitalized religion.

These young radicals, who grouped around M'hamed Ali, sought a socially progressive and economically dynamic Tunisia which would have little resemblance to the past or the contemporary order. The spokesmen for this group matched the frustrations and self-righteous assertions of a decadent class with the anger and critical impatience of an emergent group moving towards the future. They explicitly opposed the Old Turbans in the Destour whose nostalgia for bygone days portrayed its horrors. While the Destour leaders spoke of Islam and Moslem culture with the tenacity of wounded devotees, M'hamed Ali and Haddad questioned their cultural heritage with the agonizing uncertainty of honest appraisers. While the old leadership insisted on form, the young men stressed substance; the Destour's symbolic, evocative language of unquestioned belief contrasted with the radical's dialectical reasoning and Cartesian doubt.

Unlike Destour leaders such as Abdelaziz Taalbi, author of *La Tunisie Martyre*, M'hamed Ali and his associates did not consider Tunisia simply a 'martyr' of French aggression. On the contrary, they credited the French with jolting the Tunisian consciousness, and with introducing them to modern techniques of economy and administration. To them subjugation by foreigners resulted from internal weakness, and only by reforming the society and the individual could

they hope to achieve meaningful emancipation. At a time when Destourian leaders directed their energies at dramatizing Tunisia's legal claims to independence and pinned their hopes on support from Woodrow Wilson, the League of Nations and the French socialists to bring them political reform, the trade union intellectuals insisted on looking inward and called for social transformation. A strong emphasis on self-improvement and self-reliance, a search for operative ideas and organizing principles and an impatient desire to root out the causes of backwardness, however sanctified by tradition, were some of the characteristics which defined the attitude and behaviour of this group. Their activism contrasted with the verbal evangelism of the traditionalist leaders.

When the opportunity occurred the radicals gave their active help and counsel to the nascent labour movement and provided it with technical aid as well as moral support. In the trade union movement they were finding a forum to articulate their ideas and programmes which challenged the premises of the traditionalists. The social and economic themes introduced by this minority of dissenters later became the guide-posts of the Tunisian labour movement, and left a permanent impression on Tunisia's nationalist and labour ideology. The working-class movement in Tunisia, while itself becoming 'nationalized', increasingly forced the nationalist movement to deal with social and economic issues and to draw nearer to a social democratic position.

Direct contact with Marxists had become commonplace for nationalist and labour union leaders after the armistice. A few Liberals within the Destour Party had joined the Socialist Party during the war when all other political groupings had been outlawed.[20] Their contacts with the European left in Tunisia pushed the nationalists toward the adoption of progressive positions. Leftists represented the France — liberal, egalitarian and revolutionary — which also appealed to the Tunisian labour leaders. These Europeans differed with the France which the Tunisians hated as a colonial power. In an ethnically divided country in which the Tunisians resented being the dominated and scorned majority, socialists and communists advocated equality and a society transcending race and religion. At a time when the colonized were seeking to understand the causes of their subjugation, the European left offered an interpretation of imperialism which was both satisfying and easy to understand.

The ideological position and political style of the left also discouraged the drive toward apologetics and self-glorification which in other countries characterized the general Moslem response to the West at the time. The critical posture of the Marxists towards their own society, their attacks on some French institutions and traditions, made it possible for Tunisians to question and criticize certain aspects of their own tradition. After all, if French people could



accept aspects of their culture while violently rejecting other parts, could not Tunisians be as self-critical without damaging their national personality? Thus even during the period when the Destour leaders were introducing apologetic themes, Tunisian trade union leaders were stressing the need for overcoming traditional obstacles to progress.

The presence of the European left in Tunisia contributed constructive ideological influences to nationalism, provided models for change and offered concrete examples of meaningful human contacts untinged by connotations of violence and subservience. As elsewhere in the Maghreb, the left, although small in size, was extremely active. It served as a major link between western ideas and institutions and the Tunisian population. Their labour organizations acted as socializing vehicles in which North Africans shared membership, activities and interests with Europeans. In them westerners debated and disseminated their ideas with Tunisians who at first were apprentices in the socialist CGT, then partners and finally rivals, founding their own organization.

After the First World War contacts between the European left and nationalists widened through the CGT which recruited Tunisians into a modern institution based on progressive ideology. Haddad acknowledged this debt when he praised the socialists who recognized the 'injustices and inequalities within the working class' and in whose CGT branches

Tunisian workers ... participated in the strikes, in the organization and expansion of unions, and attended meetings. They heard leaders ... proclaim the liberty and equality of man; declare that the religion of the worker was his labour and his enemy was capitalism, that neither race nor religion distinguished the workers from each other for these are the tools which capitalism employs in order to divide them and to defeat their objectives.[21]

Like their mentors in the CGT, leaders of the CGTT such as M'hamed Ali bluntly criticized their own society and were prepared to reject traditional practices and values which impeded their society's recovery from weakness and backwardness. Like the French left they preached activism, while insisting on self-reliance. Their thinking was strongly influenced by Marxism although in important details they separated from Marxist revolutionary goals and tactics. Generally their movement had reformist aims. They stressed economic development, social progress and the need to integrate workers into a modernizing society. These were essential conditions for nationhood. They tended to place more stress on the educative, integrative and productive role of trade unions than they did on collective bargaining and the struggle for wage increases.

In his discussion of the CGTT programme, Haddad mentioned four

areas of major concern to the federation. First, the trade union had an obligation to protect the workers from being cheated and to inform them of their legal rights. Secondly, they placed great emphasis on social work among the working class. The federation had to establish clubs for the recreation and cultural advancement of workers, publish books and magazines for common people, provide facilities for education and technical training of the children of union members. Thirdly, they expected the union to establish institutions for enhancing the skill and productivity of the Tunisian workers so that their productive value would be enhanced and the union might then be in a strong position to press for higher wages. Fourthly, the union had to generate internal capital to develop cooperatives. Haddad explained that the Association for Economic Cooperation, which M'hamed Ali helped forge, should be regarded as part of the labour movement although it invited the participation of all classes so that the whole nation might be united around a common reformist programme just as it was united by common suffering. They also believed that their fight to gain democratic liberties was only the first step in the direction of social and economic emancipation. And they did not see any contradiction between their commitment to nationalism and their support of universal workers' solidarity across territorial boundaries.

When M'hamed Ali proposed the establishment of a national trade union federation some workers led by Ahmed Ben Milad and Mokhtar Ayari (who nevertheless became a founder of the CGTT) at first opposed him. They argued that the plan smacked of religious prejudice and violated the principle of universalism. M'hamed Ali pleaded with them:

The creation of a Tunisian federation does not mean that we shall not be united with the workers of the world as a whole. France, Germany, and England have national federations. Why are we denied similar rights? The only reason for their [the European left's] attitude is that they would like to consider us a part of France. Is it not imperialism, denial of equality? Why such accusations from socialists and communists? Are they also deceiving us?[22]

The European left vehemently opposed the formation of a nationalist organization on the grounds that such a labour union would be inimical to the principles of labour solidarity. They charged the union seceders with racism, communalism and negativism. Even when the communist faction, represented by the CGTU, relented and aided the CGTT (providing experienced cadres and access to the party press), the Socialist Party and its CGT-affiliated unions continued to oppose



the CGTT.\* The numerically weak socialists presented serious moral and political challenges to the nationalist labour movement because they could not be easily dismissed as imperialists, and their objections had to be answered and accommodated. They had been as consistent in opposing the pretensions and the continued privileges of the settlers as they were in objecting to the 'narrow, communal, counter-revolutionary' character of nationalism. The real issues, they argued, were neither national, racial, nor religious; the working class should not permit fragmentation by dividing along such lines. European and Tunisian workers faced common enemies: the dominance of capitalism and the clergy in an alliance of special privilege perpetuated by the dead hand of tradition. The answer, they stressed, was to build a movement, liberate humanity from superstition, instil a revolutionary spirit in people and build mass institutions to defeat imperialism. The left could point to their efforts in this direction. Their parties (SFIO and PC after December 1920) and their trade unions were the only interracial political institutions in Tunisia.

On the ideological level, nationalist labour leaders were placed on the defensive. They often took their cues from the CGT programme and ideology, and defined their goals in the moral, universal and progressive terms that they had learned in the parent organization. In order to counter the harsh criticism from the European left, M'hamed Ali and his comrades had to define their goals clearly and make distinctions between political exigencies and long-term objectives. In so doing they might win over Europeans who, like the communists after their initial hesitation, could aid them to gain their freedom.

If we achieve social progress, remove our internal weaknesses inherited from the past and begin to view the world clearly and with a broad outlook, then we will be able to convince many Europeans that we deserve a free life. The Europeans do not trust our feelings; when we ask for freedom they think that we hate their presence among us, that freedom to us only means the license to wander around the streets of our nation even if this delays industrialization and leaves natural treasures buried in the ground. They are trying to mistrust us. What they say seems true when matched by our immobility and our satisfaction in exposing only their injustices and our hatred.[23]

The initiative for organizing Tunisian workers had come from

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\*The French socialist movement had split, after the Bolshevik revolution, at its conference in Tours, December 1920. A majority resolution was passed, founding the French Communist Party (PC). The French CGT subsequently split along the same lines. In Tunisia, after the split, the socialists controlled the CGT and the communists the CGTU. Ayari and Finidori from the CGTU became the main supporters of the CGTT, while Milad remained loyal to the CGT.

socialist leaders of whom the most prominent in the labour movement were Robert Louzon, Jean-Paul Finidori, A. Duran-Angliviel and Joachim Durel. A provincial branch of the CGT had been established in Tunisia during 1919; at first it grouped white-collar and skilled workers such as government functionaries, teachers, dockers, miners, railroad and street-car workers. Many Tunisians joined; some were active and a few, like Mokhtar Ayari, held positions of leadership. The widespread discontent caused by the upheavals of the war, inflation, poor harvests in the early 1920s and the success of employers in keeping wages down, were among the factors which produced a short-lived conjunction of interests between Moslems and poor whites. The socialists, reassured by the successful October Revolution in Russia, spread revolutionary propaganda with confident vigour to an audience eager for organized protests.

When the CGT split in September 1921 a major division was introduced into the labour movement. In Tunis communist leaders Robert Louzon and J.-P. Finidori formed the splinter CGTU which affiliated with the Moscow-based Red International Labour Union, while the socialists under Durel and Duran-Angliviel continued to lead the non-communist CGT affiliated with the International Federation of Trade Unions based in Amsterdam. The CGTU attracted few adherents, but tended to outdo the CGT in supporting Tunisian grievances.

The competition between the rival organizations for their support created an awareness among Tunisians of their importance while making their actual situation more unacceptable. Between 1921 and 1924 Tunisians, often encouraged by the CGT leaders, staged several unsuccessful strikes and tended increasingly to blame their failures on the lack of support that they received from the Europeans in the CGT. One strike by the Tunis street-car workers went against this trend and succeeded in achieving its goals; the strikes at five mines in the circumscription of Thala also won minor concessions; but the more important one at the phosphate mine of Sfax-Gafsa was defeated; so was the spectacular strike by Tunisian and Italian flour-mill workers which did much to dramatize labour unrest and encourage the labour movement among Tunisians.[24] To the union demands for limited working hours, regulated working conditions, the right to strike, accident and sickness benefits, Moslem Tunisians added equal pay for equal work. This last demand, however, accentuated the growing rift within the labour movement. After the promulgation of the Naturalization Act of 8 November 1921,\* the discrimination against non-French Europeans had been eliminated. Tunisian demands for equal treatment, thenceforth, had less appeal with the now privileged 'naturalized' minorities.

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\*This Act gave Europeans of non-French origin, as well as Tunisian Jews (an obviously divisive tactic this), the right to become naturalized French citizens.



And yet protesting Tunisians within the CGT were reluctant to join the CGTU which was taking more radical stands. They feared that an open alliance with the communist minority would permit the settlers to rouse the 'red scare', isolate the Tunisians and invite governmental repression. Membership in the CGTU was also discouraged by the Destour leaders for both tactical and ideological reasons. For their part, the communists failed to appeal to Tunisian workers, Haddad argued, because their revolutionary ideas and programmes which they imported from Europe had little relevance in an under-developed and colonized Tunisia. Labour unionists following M'hamed Ali, as we have already tried to show, felt that Tunisia needed first and foremost economic development and social reforms, and only a reformist ideology could form the basis of a viable CGTT.

By 1924 Tunisian workers and union leaders in the CGT were openly expressing their dissatisfaction with the organization. They complained, first, that the system of election by 'colleges' tended to exclude them from positions of leadership. Secondly, that the European members failed to support their demands for equal salary and Moslem holidays. Thirdly, that CGT officials neglected the all-Moslem unions like those of the dockers, miners and agricultural labourers. Fourthly, that their European comrades and leaders benefited from the racist and discriminatory attitudes and practices of the administration. Fifthly, there was increased feeling that Tunisians were tolerated and welcomed in the unions only because they were a source of income and because large membership served to strengthen those union demands which benefited mostly the Europeans.

Complaints crystallized into open rebellion against the CGT in August 1924. The dockers of Tunis and Bizerte, some of whom had grown close to M'hamed Ali through the cooperative movement, went on strike demanding equal wages with their Marseilles colleagues. When the CGT leaders in Tunis, while negotiating with the *Direction de l'Interieur*, advised moderation and calm, the workers formed an independent strike committee and solicited the help of the intellectual and youthful elements within the Destour Party. The latter were in the process of organizing cooperatives and an alliance with the working class promised the Destourians, including M'hamed Ali, Haddad and Tewfik al-Medani, the badly needed mass support for their nascent movement; the dockers found in the young Destourians, and particularly in M'hamed Ali, influential and adept propagandists who mobilized the urban population to support the strikers. After this a chain of events led to the formation of the CGTT separate from and independent of the CGT.

The dockers' strike in Tunis started on 13 August 1924 and ignited strikes among workers all over the country. On 17 August the Tunisian workers at the port of Bizerte went on strike with demands

similar to those of their Tunis comrades; it quickly spread to other industries in the region. After two weeks of peaceful picketing and an unsuccessful appeal to the Bey and his Prime Minister, the strikers under M'hamed Ali's leadership appealed for public and Destourian help. Popular street demonstrations, clashes with the police and widespread support for the striking workers forced the Destour publicly to endorse the workers' demands. The spiralling cost of living worsened by the poor harvest of 1924 made the Tunisian population supportive of demands for a living wage. The strikes crystallized widespread discontent. The maritime company in Tunis accepted arbitration by the Chief of Police whose department had, until labour legislation of 1936 changed the situation, the responsibility for regulating labour disputes. A compromise settlement conceded some of the workers' demands and the 24-day dockers' strike ended on 6 September. The strike in Bizerte ended after 45 days in a negotiated settlement similar to the one reached in Tunis. These two strikes set the stage for the creation of the CGTT.

These strikes, which Tunisians viewed as a significant victory over colonialism, deeply affected M'hamed Ali's plans and the succeeding events. For the first time in Tunisia they demonstrated the effectiveness of organized mass political action. They revealed widespread and deep discontent among common people who were willing to sacrifice heroically in order to win minor economic but major psychological battles against foreign exploiters. A Propaganda Committee under M'hamed Ali had concentrated on winning popular support and the nationalist party's backing for the striking workers. Financial and moral support permitted a prolonged strike and ultimate victory. It also confirmed the young trade unionists' belief that a trade union could become viable and strong only with mass and party backing based on a nationalist appeal. The initially cold and then openly hostile attitude of the Socialist Party and the CGT towards the strikers further alienated the Tunisians from the metropolitan federation and intensified the move toward the creation of a national — and ultimately nationalist — labour movement.

The split from the CGT began when striking workers, lacking the support of the CGT labour federation, established several autonomous local unions. In Tunis the dockers, textile workers, tramway employees, cement factory workers and some traditional handicraftsmen formed their own unions. Workers in Bizerte and other coastal towns also left the CGT. Arguments and debates between the French socialists and M'hamed Ali's group started.[25] The multiplication of autonomous unions alarmed CGT officials in France. Leon Jouhaux, Secretary General of the CGT arrived in Tunis on 24 October 1924 and pleaded with M'hamed Ali to help maintain workers' unity and solidarity. At a public meeting on 31 October, Jouhaux conceded that although the CGT rejected in principle any differentiations of race or



colour, in practice the European workers in Tunisia had given the Moslems a genuine cause for complaint. But he warned that separatism would only perpetuate evil practices and attitudes while intensifying divisions within the working class.[26] M'hamed Ali would not be deterred and he invited the CGT branch in Tunis to merge with the planned Tunisian federation.

CGTT leaders justified separation from the metropolitan union on rational and pragmatic grounds while asserting their loyalty to the principles of labour solidarity and universalism. Unity and cooperation, they argued, were indeed worthy ideals towards which unions and the proletariat must strive. Yet in reality there could be no genuine unity and cooperation between groups unless it was based on equality. 'If one is weak, the strong must dominate', reminded Haddad. The weak, therefore, had to get rid of their weakness in order to enforce genuine unity and cooperation at the national and international levels. CGTT leaders insisted that the socialists as well as the communists were trying to swallow the CGTT and that the latter should be wary of their calls and gestures of cooperation. They did not, however, preclude a cautious collaboration. In an attempt at justifying the CGTT's alliance with the communists, Haddad concluded that:

countries like Tunisia cannot accept integration because their resources are not sufficiently strong for it. One may, however, accept unconditional aid while retaining the sacred rights of protecting one's freedom and pursuing one's national goals as fixed by the nation itself. This is what the members of the union agreed upon after long discussion on this question.[27]

### *THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CGTT*

The CGTT was formally established on 3 November 1924. M'hamed Ali headed as Secretary General a provisional Executive Committee of twelve members, six of whom were veteran trade unionists. M'hamed Ali's role in the formation of the CGTT stemmed from his initial interest in establishing a cooperative movement. The first consumer cooperative association was launched formally on 6 July 1924; M'hamed Ali was elected chairman of the Management Committee. Dockers of Tunis, many of whom originated in M'hamed Ali's southern region and looked to him as a kinsman, were the first to join the association. Their support of him — and it should not be underestimated — gave M'hamed Ali a crucial constituency within the trade union movement.

The Management Committee under M'hamed Ali had just started its work when the striking dockers, who were already close to him,

appealed to the cooperatives' leadership for help. M'hamed Ali responded to their call at the risk of exposing himself to charges of confounding objectives. Yet conflict was inherent in the dual goals he set for Tunisians to achieve, namely winning national autonomy and achieving social and economic progress for the masses. He had hoped to launch the cooperative movement to enhance the political strength of the nationalists, but he gave greater long-range importance to economic and social progress. Yet when faced with the critical alternative of abandoning the striking workers and thereby losing his potentially most important constituency, which favoured the securing of his reformist programme, he opted for political and syndical activism. This decision led to a chain of events marking the early demise of the cooperative movement, the creation of the CGTT, and finally his banishment from Tunisia.

But initially the new federation made rapid gains; its leaders demonstrated unusual organizing ability and the masses proved ready for mobilization. After consolidating their position in Tunis they moved into the provinces. M'hamed Ali in the South and Mokhtar Ayari in the North registered unexpected successes. At its first Congress on 19 January 1925 the CGTT publicly flaunted its achievement: a majority of employed Tunisians had gathered under its banner. For the first time activists had tried and succeeded in mobilizing and organizing an important segment of the mass. For the first time a Tunisian militant, M'hamed Ali, had agitated the grass-roots by articulating concrete and specific demands. Yet his very success exposed his union to repression.

The Protectorate authorities were alarmed when union leaders reached the colon farms and workers began calling for land reform and spoke out against colonial exploitation. The French Police Chief called on M'hamed Ali to dissolve the federation and merge with the CGT. Instead the trade unionist responded by intensifying his efforts and won over more affiliates, which only increased the ire of the socialists who then controlled power in France. The Destourian leaders who had hitherto supported the CGTT were discreetly preparing to abandon it in return for reforms which they were negotiating with the Herriot government. Only communist leaders backed the CGTT, but this enthusiastic support further exposed Tunisian workers to the red-baiting practised by the settler lobby.

On the same day that the CGTT held its Congress in Tunis a spontaneous strike broke out in a cement factory in Hammam-Lif on the outskirts of Tunis; three days later it spread to the farm hands and limestone quarry workers of the *Domaine de Potinville* which belonged to the powerful family of Felix Potin. The CGTT leaders knew the risk they were running, but there was no alternative other than to support the strikers. On 5 February 1925 M'hamed Ali, Mokhtar Ayari and J.-P. Finidori were arrested. Following protest



demonstrations three other militants — Mohamed Al Ghanouchi, Mahmoud Al Kabadi and Ali Karaoui — were apprehended and charged with conspiring against the security of the state.

The Protectorate authorities easily isolated the young leaders. A Destourian delegation to Paris led by its Secretary General, Ahmed Essafi, had already negotiated the appointment of a Tunisian reform commission, and Essafi's group hoped for more political concessions. Colon interests in France and Tunisia sought to sabotage possible concessions to the Tunisians by claiming that the nationalists were dupes or agents of communism. When they raided M'hamed Ali's living quarters the police found forty books in German, leading them to claim that he was a German agent sent to Tunisia to sabotage the French colonial enterprise. Destour leaders at first answered the anti-communist propaganda by joining other tendencies, the Reformists and the Grand Councilors, in an equally anti-communist declaration.[28] A few days later the same group issued the following communiqué which repudiated the CGTT, abandoned its imprisoned leaders and adopted the Socialist Party position:

The secretary general of the CGT invited to attend the meeting explained the disastrous consequences which may result from the existence of the CGTT side by side with the CGT. He explained the advantages for the Tunisian workers of avoiding a split. After discussions the meeting unanimously confirmed his position by declaring that although it has no direct right over the workers, it decides to use its influence through press statements and public speeches to advise the workers to be united within the CGT.[29]

On 26 November 1925 M'hamed Ali, Mokhtar Ayari and J.-P. Finidori were banished from Tunisia, sentenced to ten years of exile. Two other leaders, Kabadi and Karaoui, were exiled for five years. Abandoned by the nationalist party and deprived of its leaders, the CGTT dissolved while many of its members joined the CGT.

At the time of its creation the socialists had argued that the CGTT was a step backwards. They stressed that it destroyed trade union unity and introduced a new labour federation whose *raison d'être* was religious and national. Yet, in retrospect, it appears that the work of M'hamed Ali and his associates in creating the CGTT had salutary and lasting effects on the evolution of a viable trade union in Tunisia. It trained Tunisian workers and gave them confidence in their ability to organize and rely on themselves rather than depend on Europeans for leadership. It provoked the CGT into realizing that the Tunisian working class was a politically conscious and restless mass, and not an inert force in need, simply, of paternalistic guidance. As the first widespread labour movement among Tunisians, it legitimized trade unionism as a nationalist force and incorporated into the nationalist mainstream groups of workers who had been only marginally affected by CGT activities.

The first attempt at creating a labour union allied with the nationalist movement clarified the prospects and conditions of trade unionism in Tunisia; M'hamed Ali's and the CGTT leadership's experience served later generations as a guide and a point of reference. First, it demonstrated the power of nationalism and the potential advantage of a nationalist trade union over a movement that stressed the international and class character of the workers' struggle for justice and freedom. The fact that the CGTT originated in the anti-European sentiments of the Tunisian workers who demanded equality within the CGT, and the enthusiastic response which the nationalist trade union elicited from the workers, indicated that the Tunisian working class derived its sense of exploitation from its colonial status more than from class consciousness. Later, a strong nationalist commitment would be the hallmark of UGTT ideology and slogans.

Secondly, the experience demonstrated that it was in the framework of popular and party support based on nationalist appeal that the workers had the best chance of winning even their immediate objectives. The workers sustained the prolonged strikes in Tunis and Bizerte largely because of the support they received from the masses and the Destour Party. They won some of their demands mainly because their grievances were successfully transformed into public issues. In these efforts M'hamed Ali played a crucial role. His ability to strike an imaginative chord in the union's propaganda and his impassioned eloquence carried along the reticent.

Thirdly, the collapse of the alliance between the Destour nationalists and the labour union demonstrated the temporary and contingent character of an essentially antagonistic collaboration. Destourian leaders encouraged the establishment of the CGTT, and used it as a convenient vehicle for political bargaining. But they were not willing to pay the price of changing the traditional forms of economic and social relationships inherent in organizing a mass movement for political participation. A basic contradiction existed between the attitudes and aspirations of the two groups. By and large, the Destour leaders were concerned with constitutional changes leading to national independence as an end in itself. The trade unionists were interested in fundamental social and economic reforms. Politics for M'hamed Ali and his associates was only a means to that end. The nationalist movement had not yet gained either the momentum or the militancy to allow a reasonably lasting marriage of necessity between two incongruent and disparate points of view. It is understandable, therefore, that when a socialist coalition in France raised the hopes of Destourian leaders for constitutional concessions, a militant mass movement which had an independent constituency appeared to be an unnecessary embarrassment. In their effort to please the socialists, they felt free to abandon the CGTT. The trade union could not survive without the Destour's support. This fact



underscored the need for the working class to ally with a dependable political party.

Lastly, CGTT leaders such as M'hamed Ali succeeded in laying the ideological foundations of Tunisia's labour movement. The succeeding generations, particularly Ferhat Hached and his associates, improved on their heritage and gave it practical expression. For Africans these early pioneers of the labour movement — in their thinking, their activism and their mass organizing — set a tone and style of work that was to inform future achievements.

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## The peasants are coming: migrants who labour, peasants who travel and Marxists who write

Since the late 1950s the so-called labour migration of 15 million men and women has literally changed the face of western Europe. It has come unexpectedly, leaving the social scientists once more behind — a new theoretical problem *ex post factum*. The debate which followed has turned an essentially Marxist analysis of labour migration into a dominant mode of explanation of that phenomenon. While the list of publications resorting to it grows, the spokesmen for other views have recently kept remarkably silent. By now the essential tenets of this explanation have even penetrated the objectified language of United Nations and European Economic Community bodies, boards and reports and have become increasingly repetitive — a sure sign of maturity (or senility) within the social sciences. One can treat in the same vein the recent call for the formalization of it all within a specific 'theory of its own, which would then have to be integrated into a general theory of the capitalist system of production'.

It is probably time to try to take stock of the new conceptual arrivals before new common sense and/or new orthodoxies rigidify and settle. What is the place of this new wave within social theorizing? How satisfactory is the new approach in explaining 'stubborn data' which refuse to fit into other theories and concepts? How consistent is it within the Marxist theoretical heritage it claims? Most

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importantly, where do we go from there? (Or alternatively, is it all closed and shut with the major components of the formula established?)

To make this argument less abstract I will refer to a specific text. Nikolinakos's article in *Race & Class* has presented the paradigm in an orderly enough fashion to bring out its points of strength and weakness.[1] It also called for a debate, a call not yet heeded. The notes which follow are not directed against the author but simply put to use a crisp presentation of what it is all about — 'it' being the current stage reached in the mainstream of theorizing about labour migration, declaring allegiance to Marxist political economy.[2] Also, the form used there will be followed, i.e. notes on essentials without much attempt at final cosmetics or full display of evidence.

Nikolinakos's thesis begins by placing his views and definitions in contradiction to those of classical and neo-classical economics. These, we are told, assumed a harmonious society and explained migration of labour as the mobility of factors of production, determined by laws of supply and demand. Such an approach is castigated as ahistorical, abstract and one-sided because it leaves out the political, structural and demographic factors which matter. Instead, accumulation of capital is placed in the centre of the explanation, clarifying the native workers' shift into better-paid jobs, while emigrants take on the role of the labour 'reserve army', thereby securing 'the growth and the standard of living of the West European countries', providing a structural substitute to external colonies by internal ones. The demographic processes involved (e.g. 'population pressure' in the countries of emigration) are not autonomous but once again a function of capital accumulation, perpetuating dependency between the capitalist centre and its peripheries. Countries of emigration are those which have been dependent on the colonial powers and were assigned to produce food and raw materials. Through migration, capitalism exports unemployment, from the underdeveloped countries, thus containing potential social disturbance, while the metropolis benefits from being able to send such workers home in the periods of recession. Migrant sub-proletarians are exploited simultaneously as individuals, as a class and as natives of a dependent country. All the same, to them emigration means material improvement. The class analysis here offered places labour migrants as sub-proletarians, unmasking the structural character of their exploitation. It ends with a political call to migrants and native workers to unite, because 'in the final analysis there is objectively no interest specific to migratory workers'.

Without doubt the global process of accumulation of capital is central to our understanding of the stream of labour into western Europe during the last two decades. Focussing on it has made for the considerable achievements of Marxist analysis in the field and



explains its persuasive power even with its ideological foes and with the 'non committed'. To say it is to say much. To stop at it is to fail to see what still needs doing. It is my contention that the earlier paragraph faithfully codifies, besides considerable achievements, a related list of widespread and often repeated conceptual weaknesses and blind spots which weaken its illuminations, both in terms of the general characterization of the phenomenon and the data selected, and on its own theoretical terms, i.e. those of Marxist thought. What follows therefore is not a dismissal of, or substitution for, this analysis, but rather a demand that it be evaluated critically and supplemented.

### OLD FOGIES AND FAIR ENEMIES

One of the favourite sports of left academics is to caricature those they criticize, i.e. to present them as silly old fogies, and then to amuse the admiring public of believers by knocking them down. It is indeed abstract, not to say untrue, to refer to alternative/past migration theorists as claiming simply a harmonious world reflected in economic laws. To begin with, the very model of harmony assumes a problematic of disharmony and adjustment (e.g. 'moving equilibrium', etc.) and not only harmony *per se*. More importantly, the issue was never treated in a one-disciplinary format, i.e. as that of economics, for sophisticated non-Marxists know that this also will not do. That is where sociology comes in ('bourgeois' can be prefixed by those who like such labels). Within the relevant conceptual framework (mostly that of functionalism) the problematic and harsh realities of migration have, since the days of Park, been both acknowledged and extensively studied in far from simplistic ways.[3] Their conceptual framework — i.e. 'economizing', the attempts to treat it all as problems of 'culture', 'assimilation' and 'acculturation', the tendency to treat migrants as individuals only (within a 'melting pot'), the vagueness about class hierarchies within the 'host countries' — was analytically limiting and inherently ideological in nature. Such an approach was duly attacked and is by now very much 'in the dog-house' even with many of its past adherents. Which is all very far from treating it as non-existent or totally devoid of illumination.

It will be only fair to say here that, while all that is true of Nikolinakos, other writers similar in outlook do not leave functionalist sociology out of consideration. Yet practically all of them assume fake dualization of the conceptual field into 'them' (i.e. believers in social harmony) as against 'us' (i.e. Marxists, of course). That will not do, even if caricatures are otherwise avoided. Historically 'in between' and as an important stage before the Marxist impact came to be felt, a third conceptual position became a rallying point

for many of the radicals. I am referring to the 'race relations theories', which for a spell took the lead in criticizing functionalism, offering an alternative designation of the issue as a group problem with a distinctive type of theorizing (usually close to symbolic interactionism) and terminology (e.g. 'visibility', 'dualistic folk-taxonomy' etc.).[4] Once again, it was rightly attacked for being theoretically insufficient and partial, politically open to xenophobic excesses and in considerable trouble with evidence once it departs from its Anglo-Saxon lands of origin (for how does one account for the treatment of Italian migrants within Switzerland or the preference for the very black people of Martinique over the Algerians in France).[5] Its retreat, often blending into some sort of Marxism, does not mean its non-existence or the possibility of dropping it from conceptual debate.

All this is important not only because of the virtues of exactitude within a scholarly discourse. Far from belonging to the history of misconceptions (by now 'overcome') or else to the ideological armoury of the enemies (to be sunk), the views, achievements and limitations of those schools are immanent in the Marxist analyses of today. Which is not to call for a purge but to recall Marx's belief that only by integrating the best of his opponents' knowledge and achievements can his own type of social science flourish. Moreover, it is to assume with fair certainty future conceptual reappearance of the earlier paradigms, their sophistication enhanced by the Marxist critique.

### CLASS 'HERE' AND 'THERE'

Much more central and specific to the issues in hand is the peculiar, not to say amazing, class analysis offered within the theses referred to. We see a global society consisting of metropolis and periphery, the first exploiting the second. There is a class structure at the metropolis side of the picture: the bourgeoisie (late-capitalist) which controls the means of production, workers who do not, a foreign sub-proletariat at the very bottom. So far so good. But something dramatic happens to this class analysis once it turns to 'countries of emigration'. For there seem to be no classes there, at least none mentioned. The often repeated global model of migration is that of ethnic groups, i.e. Turks, Algerians, Spaniards, etc., who, by merely crossing frontiers, perform the no mean trick of becoming a class, i.e. proletarians, to which a prefix 'sub' can be added on demand. A non-class society of emigration (or is it a one-class society of potential migrants?) is postulated by omission — a conceptual twin-brother to the non-class 'host societies' of the models employed by the functionalist theorists of migration not so long ago.



Who are 'the migrants' on the other side of the divide which has apparently blocked the penetrating gaze of 'western' class analysts? With few manifest exceptions (e.g. the West Indians in the UK), they are mostly peasants in the sense in which this class has been specifically defined.[6] Furthermore — for classes do not exist in a vacuum — the peasants referred to belong to the stage in history which was usually defined in Europe as the 'early stages of industrialization'. Many of them come directly from the villages of Turkey, India, Algeria, Morocco, Portugal, Sicily, etc. Some of the others puzzle statisticians having first moved into the slums of their native towns, then proceeding within a few years to the foreign metropolis to be registered as 'from Istanbul', etc. (This is not the place to offer the proof of all that, but enough of it exists by now.[7]) In some of the expositions the fact of 'rural origin' (whatever that means: gentlemen farmers? rural priests? wage labourers? paupers?) has indeed been mentioned in a passing fashion. The reference is usually as dismissive as silence in so far as its class significance is concerned.

But what does it matter? Granted the good joke, and the sociology-of-knowledge-insights, of the analytical short-sightedness in presenting such a lopsided omission in a paper 'relating every aspect of the phenomenon of migration to its class characteristics',[8] is it all truly relevant to the understanding of labour migrants? After all they are now mostly urban and (sub)proletarian. What does it matter what they were?

It does matter most decisively because a Marxist, or any other class analysis can dismiss history only at its analytical peril. Migration is a sequence even to those least inclined to see the present as history. Peasants in towns differ from old proletarians. Labour migrants cannot be fully understood as a group without bringing into the picture their origins, dynamics and global context. Without this any class analysis will be indeed ahistorical and one-sided.

To specify the significance of this one must look closer at peasants who travel, migrants who labour and Marxists who write.

### PEASANTS WHO TRAVEL

The process of industrialization has also been a process of de-peasantation. To remember (or to remind one of) this context, means first, to call for our purposes on comparable data, comparative experience and analytical expertise already available. Secondly, it means delineating relevant comparisons elsewhere, e.g. Mexicans in the US, Finns in Sweden, or 'blacks' in South Africa, as well as to categorize diversity between the labour migrants from essentially peasant societies and those (in the minority) who are not, e.g. the Punjabis as opposed to the West Indians in the UK. Sivanandan's

discussion of the differences between the West Indians and Asians in England can be indeed considered in those terms.[9]. To proceed further and deeper afield, one is guided towards the relevant writings of Znaniecki and Marx, still surprisingly 'fresh' in their clarification of the two poles of de-peasantation via migration into foreign metropolises (on the one hand when villages remain, on the other hand when villages collapse).[10] Thirdly, it is to have a further insight reinforced: peasant fodder has been necessary to keep industrialization running most effectively. The explanation of that is, once more, very much an analytical achievement of the past presented in the studies of 'primitive accumulation' from Marx through Preobrazhenskii and as far as Baran.[11] The availability of peasants, to be 'structurally disintegrated' and squeezed, has been central to industrialization/capital accumulation, in that it offered cheap, hardened manual labour eminently exploitable and with the expenses of its reproduction charged elsewhere (i.e. carried by their own villages). 'Enclosing' peasant lands, the expansion of markets through destruction of crafts, the squeeze of cheap raw materials out of the colonial peasantry were also highly relevant here. But it was the peasant labour input which seems decisive, for it could rarely be substituted. To get it all moving, one has to make peasants move.

That was made easier by the fact that the often-accepted image of static, land-bound peasants is but a prejudice of the jet-traveller's point of view. The world we live in is still very much defined by peasants and peasant sons who travelled and pushed forward frontiers in their inevitable and powerful search for land, be it Russia, China, Vietnam, Sudan or America. To make their 'programme' complete a dream of somewhat unspecified liberty should be added and a stubborn will to re-peasantize as soon as possible. Such moves were specifically patterned and well institutionalized within the life of the peasant communities: the peasant son going away to settle anew, or to come back after having provided for a marriage or to pay off taxes. There was also a clear and consistent selection of the more educated and adventurous of the poor, yet not the poorest. And there were other consistent and institutionalized correlations, e.g. the relation between family position, the land available and the tendency to return.

During the last two centuries a new stage in peasant migration has emerged with the gradual closing of 'open frontiers' and the growth of industrialization, so that peasants were increasingly 'redirected' into towns, often foreign. Yet into this new stage peasant migrants have usually carried many of the old characteristics: the specific self-selection of those who migrate, the group character of migrants in the new place, the dream of return. Peasants were never the only newcomers into the industrial milieu of the West, but they were the most numerous.



One immediate conclusion is that any analysis of labour migration must consider not only the characteristics of metropolitan capitalism but also the processes of disintegration and change in rural economies and societies. Both are undoubtedly related, yet at the same time relatively autonomous in characteristics. This is why no simplistic 'background' which 'disintegrates' under the impact of 'capitalism' (all non-specified) will do; there must be a more substantial analysis of actual happenings.[12]

Secondly, one cannot proceed to study labour migration without incorporating in it a considerable amount of study of urban processes within the so-called developing societies and 'peripheries', especially of their slums.[13] Discussion of dual economy by Santos is relevant here, while the McGee's very title speaks for itself: 'Peasants in cities, a paradox, a paradox, a most ingenious paradox.'[14]

Some of the major conclusions to date should be critically examined, thus opening vistas for further thought. The model of capitalism implicit in the approach discussed above suffers from over-rationalization or 'hyper-intentionality'. To put it another way, it is based on the assumption that a class of capitalists knows best what is best for the development of capitalism and runs national and international affairs accordingly. Yet the possibility and indeed necessity of what the late Ossowskii once called the problem of 'unexpected results of socialist planning' must be at least as significant within the capitalist realm. The belief in the unlimited capacity of capitalism to expand under its own steam has been a favourite self-mystification of capitalists and economists alike. One expression of it was the politically promoted state policy of de-peasantation in western Europe, which considerably strengthened the spontaneous processes already operating in a similar direction. It meant 'over-de-peasantation' which turned into a major bottle-neck in the 1950's. Within a short time the still remaining local peasants (of, say, south Italy) and other sources of available labour force (e.g. East Germans leaving for West Germany or the French Algerians 'coming back home') were 'utilized'. The answer to the ongoing shortages was found in labour migration, i.e. a 're-peasantation' of western Europe from foreign sources. Which should help to place and 'date' it all historically and globally.

More importantly, it should put in doubt and open for fresh debate the analysis of the mechanism for the self-perpetuation of industrial capitalism. The assumption has been that once the input of peasant sweat, local and colonial, got the accumulation of capital going, capitalist expansion would be self-perpetuating and extend itself at a brisk and incessant pace, some jerks and jolts admitted. Is it so? Should it be the case that European capitalism is unable to perform 'booms' without 'primitive accumulation', i.e. by swallowing peasants (and not only oil or environment), what does it mean in

terms of prediction and prejudices concerning its growth and future global development?

### MIGRANTS WHO LABOUR

All those considerations apart, how does the upgrading of peasants from the footnote to the page help us to understand the characteristics of the present labour migrant/sub-proletarian communities? The answer to that must be related to a three-fold consideration.

Firstly and generally, class analysis which disregards the historical past is an abstraction at its worst, a reification. Consciousness and action are doubtless shaped by the objective context of economic conflict, the 'place in relations of production' as well as social structure in the broadest sense. Within these structures of determination 'men make their own history', even though 'they do not make it just as they please: they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past'. That is why, and as a part of that past, 'the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living'. [15] To see only the immediate determinations is the type of theoretical history which is no good for man or beast, except in the clearance of Ph.D.s or in impressing male and female 'blue stockings'. Anything more practical and relevant, from political mobilization through policy intervention and as far as the prediction of the actual reality, necessitates analysis in which past and present, structure and process, interlock.

Next, a central component of our whole attitude to the issue in hand must be the measure of contact with and the tendency to return back into the villages by the ex-peasants/labour migrants/sub-proletarians. In the terms of political economy this is a major way in which they differ qualitatively from the native working class (with colour, nationality and culture dropped from consideration by the terms of analysis). This is also the way to pin down retained 'peasanthood' in aspects open to inspection. Once again one runs into two economists' prejudices: (a) the belief that the 'reserve army' must be sent back when the capitalist 'boom' ends; (b) the assumption that labour migrants will not go back spontaneously (for who in his right mind would go back into poverty and lower income-per-capita rates?). That is wrong on both counts.

The replacement of the 'boom' by an economic crisis after about 1972 did not to my knowledge significantly reduce the numbers of labour migrants in western Europe. Nor can one readily assume that their rates of unemployment are higher than those of the natives. [16] A new situation developed in which the labour migrants are able to



take over the lowest paid, 'dirtiest' and most unpleasant jobs in society from the native workers, the latter group preferring to fall back on unemployment 'dole' rather than to accept such jobs any more. The influx of new labour migrants is limited by legislation, but no legal steps have actually dislodged migrant communities. The explicit interest of the local employers in having them, and the stratagems of survival of the migrants, secure it well enough.

The dream of return, rich and successful, into one's own village, has been the grand utopia, around which strategies, norms and claims were structured by the migrants. Nor were these only dreams, for one can barely find a south Italian or Irish village without some 'Americans', i.e. returnees. Indeed, to sustain a dream one usually needs some consistent proofs of its realism, even if only limited in scope. We are still short of serious and long-term studies of the matter, but some earlier comparative figures may prove indicative here. The figure for Poles, mostly peasants, who returned at the turn of the century from the rich, prosperous and free US into the poverty-stricken oppression and landlessness of Poland was 30 per cent, while the figure for the total percentage of re-emigrants from US to Europe between 1897 and 1918 was estimated to be 47 per cent.[17] Furthermore, most of these seemed to return to villages.

In so far as western Europe today is concerned, many of the migrants stay on — as expected. More than expected seem to return of their own volition (despite fears of not being able to come back again to the larger incomes, etc of 'the West').

Collective dreams interwoven with some measures of reality are serious business when characterization of social groups is concerned, especially when political consciousness is analysed. Consider economics: these sub-proletarians show the highest percentage of savings ever seen within the societies they live in — quite exceptional for proletarians (especially sub-proletarians) of any type. Consider the invested savings: massive components of it go into land and houses back home or else are saved in local banks.[18] Consider the structure of political organization: the labour migrants are said to organize within associations which play the multi-faceted role of a union, a party, a club, a co-operative; very different from what is happening around them, yet directly related to the peasant way of doing things, as reported by every student of the political sociology of the peasantry.[19] (Also, labour migrants, supposedly backward in their experience of class struggle, consistently and loyally support native strike actions, while the natives do not support theirs.[20]) Consider mental illnesses: Nikolinakos and many others are quite behind the times in assuming higher rates among migrants, for the opposite is true — a peculiarity which puts them apart when compared to the native proletarians.[21] One can proceed, but by now conclusions can possibly be drawn.

To recount, labour migrants cannot be realistically treated simply as 'objectively' similar to local proles or as a downtrodden group of people who fell from the moon. One must see them in a context which is both global and dynamic, assuming the movement of people, resources and communication in both directions as well as history in its broadest sense. The labour migrant community is a residuum resulting from emigration and selective return, i.e. very much an on-going process which influences the social structure delimited. In their social and political characteristics, besides the effects of the 'late capitalist' society, labour migrants carry aspects of peasanthood not only in the traces of the past, but also in terms of actual relations and contacts, both real and imaginary (but remember the importance of dreams, especially in political context).

### MARXISTS WHO WRITE

Analysis is ever a two-sided process. Learning Marxism comes best through working with it. While Marxist analysis has made clearer much of the labour-migrant problematic, it is as important to advance Marxist analysis by bringing the desks of those who write closer to the human experience and struggles which matter.

In that sense, despite all the points already made, we are not yet at the end of even a cursory list of basic questions in urgent need of investigation. Some of the omissions within the studies done up to date are particularly significant here.

First, there is the question not yet even posed, let alone tackled, of why social analysts, Marxist and non-Marxist alike, failed to predict one of the most significant changes in the social face of western Europe? If current theorizing is right and Marxism carries straightforward answers to all that, why is it all *ex post factum*? Were there no Marxists around before? Or is something the matter with Marxist analysis (like, for example, an in-built West-centred bias)? And, once defined, what does one do about that?

Secondly, the concept of 'false consciousness' for the explanation of the anti-labour migrant 'prejudices' within the native working class will need much more analytical muscle and sophistication before its value becomes clear. How far does interest in 'final results' go in defining actual class consciousness and political struggle? Where does it all place labour migration as against the European socialist movement? What policy of migration is to be fought for other than the self-evident and rather toothless declaration of 'equal treatment' and opposition to local police harassment of migrants? Moreover, how about the case made by Emmanuel that the consciousness of the native and migrant workers reflects correctly a basic structural difference of interests between both [22]? To recall, the analysis



reproduces in a new form what used to be referred to as the 'labour aristocracies' thesis. The conclusion may be programmatically unpleasant, but that is, if anything, an additional reason to look at the issue with particular care.

Thirdly, re-consideration of past and present must be related to any consideration of the future. The issue of the 'second generation' of labouring migrants within the cities of western Europe looks different once related to the disappearance of what was referred to as the peasant background (to show once more the value of comparison and the general character of the issue, see for example Volume 2 of the study by Thomas and Znaniecki referred to above).

Finally, the theoretical issues of the links of class and history, of global dynamics versus national structures etc. are far from being simple aspects of the problematic of labour migration. The problems involved will need more than a discussion of a specific issue can offer. It can be resolved within a broader framework of analysis or not at all.

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# Notes and documents

## UK commentary

### GRUNWICK (2)

In our analysis of the Grunwick dispute (*Race & Class, Summer 1977*) we wrote that it was necessary to 'risk writing history even as it was being made'. The subsequent pattern of events (from June to November 1977) has, we feel, borne out that analysis. In recording these developments we once again find it imperative to analyse their implications, and draw out the lessons to be learnt.

At 9am on 22 November 1977 four Asian strikers (two male, two female) from the Grunwick film processing plant started a hunger strike outside the headquarters of the Trades Union Congress in central London. The presence of four Asians (the women in saris) huddled on the pavements in near zero temperature might have been expected to provoke some sympathy, if not active support, from the TUC — for the strikers have been trying to get union recognition for over one year. Instead, they were immediately suspended from their union, APEX, and had their strike pay taken away. What has happened to change the mood of the unions so drastically?

Earlier we maintained that the reason for the union leadership's unprecedentedly forceful backing for this mainly Asian strike was that the dispute called into question the protective employment laws (especially the Employment Protection Act, covering the right to join a union), which had been the trade-off with the government in return for the Social Contract. Moreover, Asian workers had proved in strike after strike to be more militant than the indigenous workforce — threatening, through their perception of racial oppression as well as class exploitation, to bring a political dimension into the rank-and-file struggle. The unions were attempting to 'manage racism' as well as legitimize the Social Contract through the employment laws. A year ago the General Secretary of APEX thought the dispute so vital

that he raised it at the TUC Conference; now he suspends strikers for 'embarrassing' the TUC.

Since 1 June, when we last reported on the strike, the strikers have rebelled against the legal strait jacket that the TUC and APEX were attempting to impose upon them. They called on the labour movement for mass pickets; APEX, which was fast losing credibility with the strikers, was forced to back the call — since straightaway the latter had found an alternative basis of support in the rank and file of the trade union movement. Events moved fast. On 13 June, the first day of the mass picketing, eighty-four pickets were arrested and there was large-scale police violence. Newspaper reports headlined the police injuries sustained. On 14 June eleven more Grunwick workers joined the strike. On 15 June local postal workers boycotted Grunwick's mail, despite the opposition of their union executive. In the weeks that followed both the size of the mass picket and the extent of police violence increased. Those arrested included left Labour MP Audrey Wise and the militant miners' leader Arthur Scargill.

The trade union leadership had to regain control of the dispute which was fast escalating through mass action into a head-on political confrontation with government and employers. Attempts were made to limit the number of pickets by introducing official armbands, and dissident postal workers were first 'laid off' by the Post Office management and then threatened with the withdrawal of strike pay by the Union of Post Office Workers. Unable to gain financial or moral support through either official or unofficial channels, the local postal workers were obliged to go back to handling Grunwick's mail.

Since nationally, trade unions made no effort to increase the picket to the point where physical entry of goods or people was impossible, the mass picket's aim was to pressure union leaders to cut off essential supplies to the factory. Such a boycott would have been illegal but the strikers knew victory could only be won through such means. With the setting up of the Court of Enquiry (as a result of the mass picket) the union leadership had found another 'procedural' out and could defer any decision on further action. The local trades council which supported the strike committee in its call for mass pickets no longer had official union sanction. The Court of Enquiry found in favour of the earlier ACAS report and recommended the reinstatement of the strikers. This report, like its predecessor, was duly (and legally) ignored by the Grunwick management. With the failure of the TUC to act, even on its own weak conference resolution of support (September 1977), the strike committee called again for mass pickets on 17 October and 7 November. The trade union leadership remained unmoved.

Where indeed can they move to? Their 'procedures' — ACAS, tribunals, industrial courts of enquiry — have been revealed as



powerless and inadequate. To support the strikers effectively, which is their duty and responsibility, would entail breaking the law, or at least to risk doing so. But this is ruled out on a number of counts.

Such potential law breaking would threaten the deal between the Labour government and the unions — an agreement whose stability is crucial to government policy and the government's continued existence. For the trade unions to buck existing laws (e.g. to cut off supplies to the factory) would involve them in a political struggle they do not have the strength or the will to win — against the government, against the employers, against 'public opinion'.

The only alternative, in the face of their own inability to act, is to get the government to fight for them — through demanding laws to back up current procedures. But this goes against all trade union traditions: invoking laws and the courts has been seen as an infringement of workers' freedom of action and power of collective bargaining. Also, whilst trade union leaders might want or need laws to strengthen procedures of 'conciliation', this might well rebound, since the management side of the dispute, supported by the mis-named National Association For Freedom, will also be pressing for laws — but to curtail workers' rights. NAFF, Grunwick boss George Ward and the mass media have succeeded in shifting the emphasis of the dispute away from the right to join a union and the treatment of black workers to a debate on the tools of working-class struggle generally: the closed shop and the picket.\* So if laws are invoked to give power to protective procedures, no doubt laws will also be invoked to curtail the right to picket and to eliminate the closed shop. These issues are at present so controversial that the Labour government and the trade union leadership have collaborated successfully to date in not clarifying them, the unions preferring this to an unequivocal legal definition which would circumscribe their actions. Finally, to introduce legal measures into union and labour relations is a radical departure from the post-war settlement between the state and the unions — that in exchange for freedom from direct state intervention, union leaders would effectively 'police' their own rank and file.

For the rank-and-file working class in Britain this dispute raises

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\*At present the unions are allowed to negotiate a 'closed shop' (under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act) with an employer. This means that employers agree, as a condition of employment, that a particular section of the workforce belongs to a particular union. Because many employers and industries are resistant to the unions having such power, the debate has centred around an apparent freedom — that of an individual worker not to join a trade union. Picketing, although covered by trades dispute and trade union law and other laws relating to obstruction and the breach of the peace, has no clear parameters. Police have discretionary powers to determine the size and function of a picket. Laws which directly relate to picketing were drawn up many years ago in relation to totally different conditions of struggle.

other issues. It shows just how conditioned the indigenous working class has become over the last three decades to not using its power of collective action and how heavily it relies on its leadership for both direction and sanction. In this case, where the strike could be won by stopping supplies, services or scabs from reaching the factory, the leadership will not protect its rank and file. Even when workers took unofficial action, as did local postal workers (who boycotted the Grunwick mail), they were unable to get mass backing and had to give in under pressure from the union leaders. The involvement of NAFF who wish to make a test case of this dispute, the fact that the issues have been defined by the right wing and the inability of the trade union leadership to resolve the original issues have meant that for the whole working class the battleground has moved from the *issues* of struggle to the *tools* of struggle.

If the concerns of the dispute are now at one remove from those of the rank and file of the white working class, they are at two removes from the black working class. The struggle is no longer about racism or even about the vehicle through which that racism was to be overcome, unionization. It has now been shifted to a concern with the legality, or otherwise, of the weapons that unions may use. And through the concerns of the dispute being moved, black workers have lost some of the support of the black community. And support from the black community was precisely what black workers had had to depend upon during the many disputes of 1972-4 when white workers and trade unionists either ignored or openly opposed their struggles. It was because of the strength and solidarity that black workers had gained — a strength which owed nothing to traditional channels and had been developed outside them — that in this dispute the trade union leadership changed its approach. What this meant is that instead of directly sabotaging the black workers' struggle, the leaders attempted to contain and incorporate it, clapping a procedure on their backs. The use of 'official channels' (as well as the intervention of NAFF and Co.) has steered the black workers away from community based support. In the process it has become clear that for those black workers who start in the weakest of 'traditional' bargaining positions, as at Grunwick, racism and sweat-shop bosses demand tougher weapons.

And the black workers in this dispute have learnt that because of their lack of numbers, they alone cannot defeat their employers. They need the rank and file of the working class behind them. But what they find is a working class which, through trade union structures and traditions, has been acclimatized away from mass action. It is precisely because black workers have been kept from these structures by racism that they are now at the forefront of what has become one of the most political disputes in industrial history. And it is precisely because they are in this position that they have



been able to stir the memories of the white workers to the direct militant mass tactics used before, as in 1972 at Saltley.

There are many ambiguities still left from this dispute and no visible way forward. But there are a few truths and lessons learnt which will have profound repercussions throughout the labour movement. It is the Grunwick strikers who have discredited ACAS-type procedures; it is they who have shown up the hollowness of the unions' claims to be fighting racism; it is they who have exposed the weakness of relying solely on 'official channels'. Black workers, and especially black women workers, have shown that they will no longer accept their oppression and exploitation passively. And when they resist, they can inject a spirit of rebellion into the white working class rank and file — a rebellion based on collective action.

In what looks like a final act of resistance, the black strikers have adopted a traditional Indian working-class method of struggle — the hunger strike. By refusing to endorse this and by actually decrying these workers,\* APEX is discredited both in its pretensions to militancy and to anti-racism. Whether the hunger strike is a prelude to rallying spontaneous black community support once more and whether black workers in the future will be estranged from 'white trade union structures' is yet to be seen.

23 November 1977

*Since writing the above piece, Women Against Racism and Fascism interviewed two of the women strikers, Jayabeen Desai and Yasu Patel, for the anti-fascist paper CARF. Below we publish excerpts from that interview.*

*Q You have just ended your hunger strike, along with two men from the strike committee. How do you feel, and what impact do you think that it had?*

*JD* It had no impact. On they talk. They make rules and regulations. We can't make any hunger strike, can't make any demonstration, can't make any mass picket, can't do anything. Now it means they are going to tie the workers' hands and we will have no chance to do anything. For it means it will apply to everybody, not just to Grunwick strikers.

*YP* I think we went on hunger strike because we wanted to know the TUC's answer to us — whether they are going to do something or not. In a way we have got the answer. They won't do anything. Also the union executives have made a new rule that strikers can be suspended

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\*Len Murray, General Secretary of the Trade Union Congress, asked them to strike at the factory gates and not outside his office.

if they go on hunger strike, hold mass demonstrations or anything.  
*Q How do you feel about your temporary suspension from APEX because of the hunger strike?*

*JD* It's a very bad thing. The union views itself like management. There's no democracy there. Its own strikers have no right to do anything. The union says we have to accept everything that they say. We are the real fighters — the ones who came out of the company to fight for our rights. But the union just looks on us as if we are employed by them. They have done the same thing to us as Ward did — they suspended us. And now we have to fight to be reinstated in the union and then also to be reinstated in the company.

*Q What is the morale of the Strike Committee right now?*

*JD* I don't think that they can stand another 4-5 months. We're just waiting for what Roy Grantham [General Secretary of APEX] will say after the House of Lords' report. The union says they will try for recognition and if they can't get that, they will try for a ballot. They will try to reinstate us, and if they can't, they will try to get us another job.

*YP* Even if APEX is recognized, it will not be our victory. It will be the victory of the scabs inside. They would get a union without fighting. And it would be the victory of the union, not our victory — not the victory of the real people who are fighting. We have fought for 16 months, but without reinstatement, we would get nothing.

## Report on the Seychelles

### *A bloodless coup*

A coup d'état took place in the Seychelles in June 1977. On Sunday the 5th, early in the morning, a small group of unarmed but well-trained men, militants of the Seychelles Peoples United Party (SPUP), took over the police arsenal without meeting any resistance and occupied the key positions in and around Victoria, the capital.

Apart from the five British expatriate officers in charge, all the police force was more or less on the side of the 'freedom fighters', and some of its members had even taken part in planning the coup. The five British officers were detained and, together with the Irish Chief Justice, were put on the first plane to Britain the next day.

Britain recognized the new regime on 13 June. This was eight days after the coup and while Jimmy Mancham, the President of the Seychelles, was in London attending the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. The US, France and other western countries followed suit.

Immediately after the coup a state of emergency was declared and



a strict curfew imposed. However, with the situation remaining calm, the curfew was gradually relaxed and a week later life was back to normal, with the banks, shops and restaurants open and the tourists strolling around Victoria as usual. Shortly after it was announced that the constitution had been suspended and parliament dissolved.

A new government, with Albert René as the new President, was formed and, pending a new constitution, government would be by presidential decree. All laws would remain in force in the meantime. All international agreements would be kept and a policy of non-alignment followed, priority being given to safeguarding the independence of the Republic. Seychelles would remain a member of the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. Tourists, including South Africans, would continue to be welcomed. And foreign investors were reassured that their interests would be safeguarded. But landowners, Seychellois as well as foreigners, have been warned that land must not be left idle. Properties which are not being worked could be taken over and developed in the national interest, a fair compensation being paid to owners.

A number of social measures were put into effect immediately. All rents on government housing were abolished. The government bought an area of land to be developed and handed to the poor to build their homes on with government loans. School fees at all levels were abolished. Prices in the shops were frozen and strictly enforced. A minimum wage for the lowest paid workers was set. Seychellois have been promoted to all the top posts in the police and the civil service — some of the British expatriates displaced being kept as advisors.

Measures of a more symbolic nature were also taken: a new national flag and national anthem have replaced those of independence, judged to be too 'colonial'. Creole has been made an official language with French and English. An amnesty was declared for all prisoners, 'giving them a chance to reform and work for the new Seychelles'. The President has cut his own salary by half and substantially reduced that of other ministers. The presidential car — a Rolls Royce — has been put away to be used only by visiting dignitaries. Likewise the State House will be used as a residence only by important visitors, the President staying in his own house, 'like all Seychellois'. The title of 'Excellency' has been dropped from the President's name. The word 'servant' has been replaced by that of 'worker' in domestic employment.

Rumours in the foreign press that the deposed President Mancham was recruiting mercenaries to attempt a counter coup led to the decision to form a militia of volunteers. All Seychellois are entitled to join. Unarmed and unpaid, the functions of the militia are to report on any landings on the islands and also help to explain and organize

support for the revolution. Active defence is the responsibility of the Army of Liberation, newly formed around the core of freedom fighters who took part in the coup. Tanzanian army experts came to the Seychelles after the coup to train the new army. The President has also announced that if the Seychelles were invaded, he would call upon friendly countries, such as Britain and France, to help expel the enemy.

With international recognition, the coup could be said to have achieved all its immediate objectives. Carefully prepared, it was executed with great skill and everything went according to plan. The minimum of violence was used — it was planned to take place in the absence of Mancham in order to avoid bloodshed. As it turned out only one policeman and one freedom fighter died, almost by accident.

The coup was a consequence of tensions arising from distortions in the political system during the last stages of the somewhat hasty constitutional developments.

### *Constitutional developments*

An archipelago of ninety-two islands, the Seychelles are spread over more than 200,000 square miles of the Indian Ocean — a fact of some military significance. The land area of the entire archipelago, however, is only 158 square miles. Over 90 per cent of the people live on Mahé, the main island. The population is creole and has been created entirely by European colonization. The islands were uninhabited until the arrival of the French, from Mauritius, with their African slaves in 1770, and became a British colony during the Napoleonic wars. The change of colonial power did not affect the great majority of the population, slavery continuing until 1935. Abolition left the economic structure, based on plantations of cash crops for export, intact. The end of slavery also increased the size of the African population. The British navy, in imposing abolition, brought ships loaded with slaves captured off Zanzibar to the Seychelles. The slaves were set free and, by increasing the labour supply, helped keep wages on the plantations at bare subsistence level. Over the past century the export crops have changed: cotton and vanilla have been superseded by coconuts and cinnamon. But a few families, mostly white Seychellois, still control the land and exploit the labour of the vast majority of black Seychellois. Without land the plantation worker is dependent upon the plantation owner for housing as well as employment. As the supply of labour far exceeded the demand for the simple tasks of picking coconuts and stripping the bark off cinnamon trees, cash was hard to come by and unemployment was endemic before the opening of the airport and tourism.

A soaring birthrate, since the Second World War, made the position worse and increased dependence on the British. The British



Treasury with its own difficulties at home, did not relish the idea of continuing to subsidize the Seychelles. After careful investigations, and negotiations with the Americans, Britain decided in 1965 to build a large airport capable of accommodating the largest military and civilian aircraft. The US Air Force had already established a tracking station on the Seychelles, paying Britain £300,000 a year in rent. The plan now was that the US would contribute half the cost of the £10m airport as part of a deal in which Britain would dismember the two colonies of Seychelles and Mauritius and create a new territory — the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) — to be made available to the Americans for the building of a large military base.

The airport was completed in 1970. As the tourists flocked in the price of land and everything else soared. The impact on Seychelles has been overwhelming. Hotel building created a boom which temporarily wiped out unemployment. People left the plantations and flocked to the town, creating a severe housing shortage. Land prices were out of reach to all but the richest Seychellois. High, and seldom fulfilled, expectations led to drunkenness and prostitution — the *cortège* of tourism in the third world, here amplified by the scale and suddenness of the influx.

The plantation owners, lacking the necessary know-how, the markets and the enormous amount of credit capital required in the modern tourist industry, have either been by-passed altogether or have sold part of their land for development to the holiday and hotel giants of Britain, France, South Africa and the petrodollar millionaires of the Middle East.

This transformation accentuated political rivalry on the islands. For most of its history Seychelles has been a colonial dictatorship. Not until 1948 was an electoral element brought into politics. But the suffrage was restricted to the landlords and the few rich merchants. Universal suffrage was not introduced until 1967 — when the number of voters jumped from about 2,000 to over 19,000. Although a new constitution introduced in 1970 increased the number of elected representatives in the legislative assembly, real power was left in the hands of the British colonial governor. The last general election was held in Seychelles in June 1974, when the islands' two parties competed for the fifteen seats in the legislative assembly: the Seychelles Democratic Party lead by Jimmy Mancham and the Seychelles People United Party lead by Albert René.

Jimmy Mancham, a 35-year-old British-trained lawyer, son of one of the rich creole-chinese merchants of Victoria, and an anglophile, had entered politics and formed the SDP with the coming of mass politics to the Seychelles. He won considerable political success by gaining the support of the foreign investors, the local British expatriates, the town merchants and, for a time, the small but influential middle class of the civil service. And, being a populist leader, he was

also able to muster substantial support among the masses. Although he had been groomed by the British colonizers to take over, Mancham advocated closer union with Britain at a time when the British were trying to wind up their formal colonial position East of Suez by handing over to the Americans. He argued that self-determination need not result in independence for the small territories. The peoples of these territories could freely choose to remain part of a larger European state — there was, for example, the relationship between Réunion island in the Indian Ocean and France. Seychelles, he said, would not be viable economically on its own and would be unable to defend itself if it became an independent sovereign state.

But combined pressures from the UN, the OAU and the radical states in the area finally forced Mancham to retract. He announced, shortly before the 1974 general election, that he too would seek independence for the Seychelles. A change of emphasis in British policy with the Labour party coming to power in the spring of that year also pointed that way. This volte-face apparently served him well: his party won thirteen of the fifteen seats in the legislative assembly. The SPUP of Albert René, however, claimed that the elections had been unfair, unfree and undemocratic, alleging widespread electoral fraud by the SDP with the connivance of the British authorities. The elections had been conducted under the first past the post system, which produced a particularly distorted result. The SDP, with 52 per cent of the votes, won thirteen seats, while the SPUP, with 48 per cent of the votes, won only two seats.

The SPUP had been formed by Albert René, a white Seychellois and also a lawyer, about the same time that Mancham had formed the SDP. Unlike Mancham, he had campaigned for independence from the start. He stood for the return to Seychelles of the islands Britain had amputated to rent to the Americans and for an Indian Ocean peace zone free from militarization by the great powers. He called for a non-aligned Seychelles with closer relations with the 'progressive' countries of the area. René's programme also included elements of a social and cultural revolution — a break with the dependency complex, the creation of a self-reliant society with more justice and brotherhood. Employment, housing and food were priorities he had stressed all along.

René formed a well-structured party based firmly on the working class. The party has always been linked to the trade union movement and counted a number of leading trade unionists among its leadership. The SPUP gained recognition from the OAU as a liberation movement engaged in freeing the Seychelles from British rule. The OAU gave active support in the form of literature and money for its electoral campaigns, and a platform to make its voice heard internationally. A small number of SPUP militants received guerrilla



training in the camps of the liberation armies operating from Tanzania, and this was put to good use in the coup.

After the 1974 elections the SPUP had continued to press for electoral changes and for new elections to be held, under international supervision, before independence. At a constitutional conference in London, in March 1975, Britain, supporting the position of Mancham who had won the 1974 elections, again rejected the demands of the SPUP. Instead the leaders of the two political parties were encouraged to come together and form a coalition which would then take the islands into independence in June 1976. Failure to come together, the SPUP was told, would mean that independence would be put back to 1979.

To facilitate the formation of a coalition government, the constitution was amended to allow for the nomination of ten new members to the legislative assembly. Five were nominated on the advice of Mancham from the SDP and the other five were chosen from the SPUP on the recommendation of René. These nominations gave the SDP a total of eighteen members (thirteen elected and five nominated) and the SPUP a total of seven members (two elected and five nominated) in an enlarged assembly of twenty-five members.

Yet another constitution was drafted and, unusually for a British decolonization constitution, it was a republican one, with a president combining the roles of head of state and chief executive with far-reaching powers. Foreign affairs, defence and internal security were to be his exclusive prerogative. He could appoint and remove the prime minister and other ministers and dissolve parliament. But, most important, he could amend the constitution providing two-thirds of the members of the legislature agreed. Moreover, he could remove the ten nominated members at his discretion. This meant that the president could remove some or all of the five nominated members of the SPUP at will, leaving the party with only its two elected members. The president would thus have a majority in the assembly to amend the constitution as he saw fit. The constitution also laid down that the period between independence in June 1976 and June 1979, unless the assembly was dissolved sooner by the president, would be an interim period. Members elected in 1974 would keep their seats during the interim until June 1979. Jimmy Mancham was named in the constitution as president for the interim period and had, in effect, unlimited power up to June 1979, when he would have to stand for re-election, along with the rest of the assembly.

The risk of losing power was the more pronounced for Mancham since the British had finally agreed to change the electoral system in the direction that the SPUP had been demanding for years; a variant of proportional representation. This new electoral system had been the crucial condition for the SPUP to enter into coalition with the SDP and go into independence before new elections, as Mancham fully

realized. The temptation to avoid facing the electorate by amending the constitution became overwhelming.

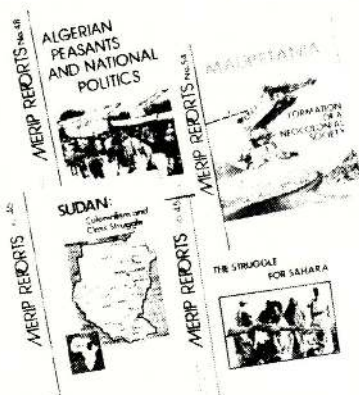
At first Mancham's intention was to get René's agreement on such an amendment. Mancham argued that the coalition government was doing an excellent job. That the combination of himself as president and René as prime minister, with their respective aptitudes complementing each other, was ideal. That the alliance of the two parties had brought the political stability to Seychelles necessary for foreign investment and economic growth. René refused, insisting that the coalition was only for the interim period and that he had agreed to it only to get independence from the British in 1976. Mancham retorted that he would go ahead and amend the constitution anyway. He had the required majority and would introduce the necessary measures before the anniversary of independence on the 29 June 1977.

Mancham then left for the Commonwealth conference, having been assured by his British police chiefs that all was well in the Republic. René conferred with his SPUP colleagues and decided that he would have to move immediately for, by the end of June, Mancham would be president for life and he, René, most probably in jail or in exile. Thus was the 5th of June Movement set in motion.

Aberdeen.  
October 1977

JEAN HOUBERT

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# Book reviews

*Unequal Development: an essay on the social formations of peripheral capitalism*

By SAMIR AMIN (Sussex, Harvester Press, 1976). 440pp. £10.50

In his latest book Samir Amin analyses 'the development of under-development', and uses Arghiri Emmanuel's *Unequal Exchange* to discuss the roots of unequal development in the neo-colonial world.

He explicates the theory of unequal exchange in terms of examples. Assume, he says, that a certain product is manufactured by an advanced country at the capitalist centre and an under-developed one on the periphery. Both, say, pay the same wages in real terms, but the organic composition of capital is higher — that is to say, the productive techniques are more developed — in the former than in the latter. The advanced country will therefore produce more units of the product per hour than the country of the periphery. Since both countries are integrated into the world market, the product is sold at a uniform price. Accordingly, one hour of total labour of the advanced country secures more products on the international market than one hour of total labour of the less developed country. Additionally, if this product, sold at the same price, enters working-class consumption, then one hour's labour of the developed country earns more than an hour's labour in the peripheral one.

Amin then assumes that both countries produce the same product and sell it on the world market at the same price, but that both now have the same organic composition of capital, while the wages of the underdeveloped country are one-fifth that of the advanced country. The lower wage country receives in international exchange, for an equal quantity of labour of the same productivity, about three-quarters less than the advanced country. This type of exchange, he argues, is really unequal and exists in reality. In 1966 the overall total

exports of the third world amounted to \$35 billion. Of this total the modern sector — oil, mining, processing of minerals, plantations — provided \$26 billion, or three-quarters. If these products were manufactured by the advanced countries, using the same techniques and therefore having the same productivity, their value, the author concludes, would be at least \$34 billion. As a consequence, the transfer of value from the periphery to the centre amounts to \$8 billion.

The inequality, according to Amin, is more glaring in respect of the traditional sector of the underdeveloped country: agricultural goods produced by the peasantry. Here, the rewards of labour are much lower than productivity. For instance, an African peasant obtains, in return for a hundred days of very hard work each year, a supply of imported manufactured goods. Their value is the equivalent of twenty days simple labour of the European skilled worker. Exchange, Amin concludes, is therefore very unequal. He reckons that the transfer of value from the traditional sector to the centre amounts to \$14 billion. This transfer is greater than in the case of products provided by the modern sector of the periphery, because direct labour — the source of surplus value — is embodied in almost the whole of the value of the product.

The underdevelopment of the third world, according to both Emmanuel and Amin, originates in the sphere of circulation and at the level of production prices. Both treat wages as an independent variable, and organic composition of capital as a simple arithmetical ratio. Emmanuel's argument, in particular, seems to imply that the exploitation of the periphery would cease with equal exchange and equitable prices and wages. In an important reply,[1] Charles Bettelheim has laid bare the shortcomings of Emmanuel's methodology and the reformist implications of his conclusions. Both wages and organic compositions of capital are firmly based on the complex combination of production relations and the forces of production. For Marx inequality of organic compositions is an effect of the inequality of the development of the productive forces, an effect which is reflected in certain forms of unequal exchange.

For Emmanuel, as for Amin, changes in wages appear independently of any variations in the production relations or at the level of the productive forces. Wages are in fact the price of labour power, which depends partly on variations in its social productivity, and partly on economic, political and ideological instances. These include the level of the class struggle and, critically, for dominated countries, the complex combination, in a given social formation, between capitalist and non-capitalist production relations. Marx notes:

the number and extent of (the worker's) so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them are themselves the product of



historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilisation of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour power a historical and moral element.

Thus, the existence of certain non-capitalist relations, such as subsistence economies, which supplement wages, does lower the 'necessary wants' and also the value of labour power.

Wages are therefore integrated into a complex structure of a concrete social formation and are not independent of this structure. Accordingly, wages cannot automatically be raised to alleviate the poverty of the third world, to equalize international exchange and secure a 'just price'. Such a conception, Bettelheim rightly argues, leads to reformist illusions. The low wages are connected with the low level of the productive forces and the production relations which have impeded the growth of these forces. The relations of exploitation cannot be determined at the level of exchange, but at the level of production on which exchange feeds. Therefore, the poverty of the dominated countries and the wealth of the dominant countries are in a sense anterior to exchange between them.

Capitalist relations of exploitation are constituted, not by exchange relations between two countries, but by relations between workers on the one hand, and owners of the means of production on the other. These are class relations and not relations between countries. Bettelheim also notes that a mere transfer of value from the capitalists of the poor country to the capitalists of the rich country cannot be described as exploitation, in the strict sense of the term, because only workers can be exploited; certainly not one group of exploiters by another.

Amin believes that the workers of the third world are more intensively exploited than the workers of the advanced countries. Certainly, on the basis of extracting absolute surplus value the toilers of the dominated countries are more brutally exploited. But this is not the same thing as more efficient exploitation in terms of extracting a larger portion of surplus value. Marx has shown that the more developed the productive forces, the more the proletarians are exploited: that is to say, the higher is the proportion of surplus labour to necessary labour. The workers of the advanced countries secure wages which are nominally higher and secure greater purchasing power than those of the poor countries, but form a smaller proportion of the value these workers produce. This derives from the higher level of intensity and productivity of labour in the rich countries.

Bettelheim substantiates this point by observing that the vast proportion of the world's capital investment is focussed in the

advanced countries precisely because the technical rate of exploitation is higher there than in the third world. Yet, this argument raises certain problems. For, on the other hand, economists like Harry Magdoff and Paul Sweezy have argued that much of the capital in the imperialist world has been generated by the exploitation of the third world where the rate of return on investment is often higher than that secured in the western countries: Brazil, Malaya and South Africa are cases in point. The debate has seminal political implications: for if Bettelheim is correct, then the workers of the dominant countries have a critical role to play in the struggle against imperialism.

Amin sees the main contradiction in the world capitalist system as that between the productive forces and the production relations. At the level of class relations this means the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat on a world scale. In his earlier work, *Accumulation on a world scale*, Amin discusses this primary contradiction. (He excludes, from the world bourgeoisie, the Soviet ruling class which, in his view, represents a transitional system: neither capitalist nor socialist.) The social formations of the periphery have all been penetrated by, and subordinated to, the world capitalist system. The ruling classes of the third world are therefore part of the world bourgeoisie. All pre-capitalist and feudal forms, which persist in the neo-colonial world, are an integral part of the world capitalist machinery.

As for the world proletariat, its central nucleus, Amin argues, is no longer the working class of the advanced countries, but the toilers of the third world. This conclusion is grounded in his view that the workers of the dominated countries are more exploited than those of the rich countries, that they now comprise the majority of mankind. Like the bourgeoisie of the third world, this vast majority of workers are of various types, consisting of wage earners, of the urban unemployed, of an impoverished peasantry which is increasingly being proletarianized.

Despite Amin's adherence to the theory of unequal exchange, his political conclusions are revolutionary. In order to achieve autarkic development the dominated countries have not just to overtake but surpass the advanced countries. They need to disengage from the world market by inaugurating socialist revolutions. But that such social overturns in the periphery can bring about the collapse of capitalism at the centre is unlikely.

London

KEN JORDAAN

- 1 Charles Bettelheim, 'Theoretical Comments', in Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange: a study of the imperialism of trade* (London, 1972), Appendix I



*Socialist Korea: a case study in the strategy of economic development*

By ELLEN BRUN and JACQUES HERSH (New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1976). 442pp. \$16.50, £9.25.

*Race & Class* is a good place to review a book on Korea; its history is redolent of those key factors. Korea is an ancient nation whose roots go back thousands of years and whose present integrity dates from around the seventh century — probably earlier than any European country. Korean identity has been tempered in the flame of oppression and resistance. In the present century Korea underwent a colonial experience which was not the less brutal for being relatively brief (1910-45), nor the less horrendous for being perpetrated — unlike, say, European colonialism in Africa — by a near neighbour of superficially similar 'race'. Korea provided Japan with crucial food, raw materials, minerals and labour. Japan in return treated Koreans as sub-human (and still does, to the 600,000 Koreans who remain as 'the blacks of Japan'), and mounted a savage assault on their identity — even forbidding the use of the Korean language in schools.

'Liberation' came in 1945 with the Japanese defeat, but it was two-edged. 'Temporarily', almost casually, the USA and USSR each occupied half the country. (The USSR in fact got there first, but graciously acceded to America's request to stop at the 38th parallel). Russia also agreed to a period of 'trusteeship', with the West bleating the usual cant about 'fitness for self-government'. So this ancient nation found itself both unfree and divided. Some liberation — in the South the US military government reinstated the Japanese and their collaborators, dredged the gutter to find the only Korean 'nationalist' who refused to work with Communists (Syngman Rhee), foisted him on a terrorized populace in fraudulent elections rubber-stamped by a pliant 'United Nations', and unsurprisingly found itself faced with almost continuous risings and rebellions.

It was otherwise in the North. The Russians worked with and through Koreans, led by the young Kim Il Sung, at 33 already the veteran of a decade of anti-Japanese guerilla struggle. Within a year there were sweeping and popular land and other democratic reforms. The next five years saw on the one hand untiring efforts to prevent a permanent national split, and also the beginnings of a strategy to redirect Korea's rich resources 'towards the inside', to build an independent national economy.

But imperialism was not finished with Korea. In 1950 came the inevitable civil war (for that is what it was, although internationalized). This was the signal for the US to prostitute further the name of the UN and unleash an onslaught whose savagery has been compared with Dante's *Inferno*. Eighteen bombs per square kilometre (97,000 tons in the first three months alone, along with 7.8 million gallons of napalm); every major industrial enterprise flattened, the

countryside cratered like the moon and irrigation dikes deliberately bombed (as later in Vietnam); Pyongyang reduced to rubble, with only two buildings undamaged, its population down from 400,000 to 80,000; half a million military and a million civilian casualties, and a population loss of over one million ...

But Korea was not beaten. Allies offered post-war aid, but not without strings; still determined to build an independent economy, the Koreans insisted on pushing ahead with heavy industry and using aid to buy machines rather than food or consumption goods. So in 1956 they had to listen to a Soviet ticking-off, reminding them that Korea 'leans upon' Soviet help and getting in also a dig at the 'cult of personality'. (Nice irony of history that this Soviet delegate was none other than Leonid Brezhnev, who twenty years on seems scarcely less keen to monopolize power than Kim Il Sung, and to much less good purpose.)

Happily, the Koreans have survived both their enemies and their friends. The ex-colony is now a major industrial power; a shining example to the world that development is *possible*, independent of 'trade and aid', 'export-led growth' and all the paraphernalia of western ideological claptrap. It remains divided: the aforesaid 'claptrap' holds sway in the South, where stagnation has been succeeded by an economic 'miracle' that has produced extremes of wealth and poverty with accumulated debts of some \$10 *billion*, so far; and whose character was best summarized by the minister who in all seriousness congratulated his country's prostitutes for selling their ('gangster-expletive deleted') and earning valuable foreign exchange.

All this deserves to be better known in the post-Vietnam era, which makes it both possible and necessary to re-evaluate events still too often viewed through the distorting mirror of Cold War politics. Any book on Korea, especially socialist Korea, and especially written by socialists, is therefore welcome. Brun and Hersh are Danish-based writers who have twice visited the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea). In some respects they have written the book one has been waiting for; a detailed account of the genesis, structure and accomplishments of the real Korean miracle, to fill out the more or less fragmentary or biased sources previously available. Usefully, they do still more than this; selectively but perceptively versed in the general literature and problems of underdevelopment and socialist transition, they do not hesitate to draw out general lessons for the third world and make interesting comparisons.

That said, the book is also in some ways disappointing. It is longer than necessary and heavy going in parts (it's an unexpected disservice to the exciting and heroic Korean revolution to make it seem boring). The tedium especially grows from an excessive emphasis (e.g. in Part III) on issues of planning and organization, which in turn indicates a deeper weakness. For Brun and Hersh (as perhaps for the



DPRK itself), 'socialism' is seen principally as a question of planning, administration, organization, 'laws', steering just the right balance between leftist and rightist deviations. 'Spontaneity' and the self-organization of workers and peasants get short shrift.

What it boils down to is that, whether from true belief or tactical expediency, Brun and Hersh (with only the rarest and smallest of quibbles) accept and promulgate the official DPRK line on everything, 'cult of personality' (vigorously denied) not excepted. This does a considerable disservice to the DPRK and to the proper role of western socialists. Admittedly, it is not an easy dilemma that western sympathisers of the DPRK face: they must be sensitive to half-a-century of what Ali Mazrui (most percipient of reactionaries) has called the 'white Marxist's burden', of which Korea has suffered its share.

Yet such uncritical support is surely no answer either. For one thing, the DPRK's image in the outside world (including the third world and above all South Korea) just is not good; and there are a number of nettles (publicity campaign, cult of personality, booze in Scandinavia) which have to be grasped in order to get taken seriously the DPRK's very striking achievements. Equally, there are real issues of historical interpretation at stake. The Korean revolution is *not* co-extensive with the story of Kim Il Sung; crucial though his role has been, it did not begin with him and will not end with him. The origins of the war provide another case in point: as Jon Halliday's pioneering work\* shows, what we need is not 'pat' answers ('who started it?') but to re-examine the *questions*. Above all, the continued existence (and at least medium-term viability) of the Seoul regime is not only due to the tenacity of imperialism but also, it must be admitted, something of a standing reproach to the DPRK and its image. When the Southern revolution comes, as it will, how much will this really owe to, take its cue from, or generally relate to, the government in the North?

Brun and Hersh choose not to confront such issues. This means that, while they may well provide useful detail and interesting discussion for those already favourably inclined to the DPRK, their book cannot be taken as a complete and wholly rounded account of its subject. More seriously, I cannot see it winning to the DPRK any of the *new* sympathy and support which Korea both needs and deserves. There are encouraging signs that Pyongyang is beginning to appreciate the idea of 'critical support' as an essential component in the approach of western groups (such as the Korea Committee in the UK)

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\*See for instance his contributions to John Gittings and Gavan MacCormack (eds), *Crisis in Korea* (Nottingham, 1977). This volume, produced by the Korea Committee (UK) deals with both North and South Korea (the present reviewer wrote the chapter on the DPRK) and generally attempts to work out the implications of a sympathetic, but critical position.

who actually want the DPRK, and Korean problems generally, to be taken seriously by a western audience. The rest of the world has much to learn from and about socialist Korea. Brun and Hersh have made an important contribution, but more still needs to be done.

University of Leeds

AIDAN FOSTER-CARTER

### *Crisis in Korea*

Edited by GAVAN McCORMACK and JOHN GITTINGS. Produced by the Korea Committee, London, and the Transnational Institute, Amsterdam (London, Spokesman, 1977). 190 pages. £2.95

One of the unintended results of the Indochina War has been a widespread and well-deserved scepticism about western aims and policies, including the interpretations put forth by western scholarship on sensitive international issues. One of the last bastions of conservatism in the field of political science remains the Korean question. This is not without significance, as this problematic was the point of departure for the ideological offensive of the 'free world' against socialism in general, and Asian socialism in particular. The Korean War, during which sixteen 'democracies' and pro-western states (including South Africa) intervened in an *internal* conflict, could reasonably be compared to the western military intervention in the Russian civil war at the beginning of this century.

Since the 1950s, events on the Korean Peninsula have been depicted in the West as having been entirely the responsibility of North Korea. Although mistakes could be ascribed to the southern anti-Communist side and its allies (mainly the United States), they were usually assumed to have been unintentional. Only in the last few years have attempts been made to investigate the question objectively and give as true a picture as possible. This has been difficult, not only because of the influence which American CIA-inspired publications have spread around the world, but also because of the counter-productive propaganda of the DPRK (North Korea) in the West.

It is in this light that the editors and contributors to the volume under review must be commended. *Crisis in Korea* is written within a well conceived framework with all the relevant subject-matter presented in an easily readable and dynamic manner. It is composed of five parts with eleven contributions dealing with: the origin of the problem; the present internal situation in both North and South Korea; the outside interferences, and last but not least the question of reunification.

The first part, 'division, revolution and war', goes back to the true origin of the problem. Having carried on a national liberation struggle



against Japanese imperialism, the Korean people were deprived of the fruit of their efforts when, after the defeat of Japan, the United States took it upon itself to divide the country. The ensuing period up to the Korean War was characterized by popular explosions below the 38th Parallel. These were due both to the deteriorating social conditions and to the US military government's imposition of a repressive regime which would perpetuate the division of the country. Thus, very early after independence from Japanese colonialism, the expectations of the Korean people were frustrated. The scale and scope of the social disorders in the South are seldom discussed by official historians, but they were actually the events leading to the conflict between the North and the South which must be considered to have been primarily a *civil war*.

The second part, 'The South', and the third part, 'The North', deal with the two societal formations as they have developed on both sides of the dividing line. In these contributions on the two systems existing within one nation, one gets the essence of their differences. The South has become one of the few third world countries which is portrayed as a success story. However, being integrated into the world market system, its entire economy is geared for export and is completely dependent on foreign capital anxious to take advantage of a cheap labour force. Thus, whatever the statistical growth rate, this castle is built on sand. Besides, even under relatively favourable conditions, this particular type of economic growth has created enormous social problems. The regime, one of fascist suppression, embarrasses even its closest allies. In contrast, the northern economy is one based mainly on self-reliance. The DPRK's socio-economic achievements represent a real contribution to the struggle against underdevelopment. Students of economic development will certainly be most interested in this analysis of the two systems. In this respect it may be added that the debt problem of the North, much discussed by western media, is also taken up here and put into its proper perspective.

The fourth part, 'Outside pressures', gives a thorough understanding of the West's (including Japan's) intervention in the affairs of the Korean Peninsula from the time of western imperialist expansion in the area up to today.

By devoting the final section of the book to 'Reunification', it closes ranks behind the Korean people who can't be expected to accept forever the division of their nation. It is at present difficult to see how this process will come about, but as the last contribution points out, only the North is currently offering any constructive proposals. One of the main prerequisites must be that reunification takes place without external intervention and therefore the withdrawal of American troops from the South would be a step in the right direction.

Not entirely uncritical towards the DPRK, this collection of

contributions attempts to give an objective picture of the Korean reality. By doing so, it contributes to the struggle of Koreans for the reunification of their fatherland.

Herlev, Denmark

JACQUES HERSH

*Race Relations — the new law*

By IAN MACDONALD (London, Butterworths, 1977). 246pp. £14.50

It will be a pity if Ian MacDonald's general comments on the new Race Relations Act, set out here in an introductory chapter,\* are allowed to overshadow his detailed exposition of the Act's provisions. For in addition to explaining the general context of this new legislation — in particular, the need to defuse racial conflict in industry, as evidenced by the militancy of Asian workers, and to head-off the disaffection of black youth — MacDonald has provided a superb analysis of the legal context in which the Act will operate.

In retrospect, it can be seen that previous legislation in this field was never intended to be enforced, in the strict sense. Individual complaints had to be channelled through the Race Relations Board, with its drawn out conciliation machinery, and only the Board itself could initiate legal action. Under the new Act a concession has been made in that it will now be possible to go straight to the courts or, in employment cases, industrial tribunals to seek individual redress. But as MacDonald shows, this concession is hardly likely to be effective for the mass of black people. The 'burden of proof' will still rest with the complainant, a burden that will be particularly heavy in the crucial area of 'indirect' discrimination. In the field of employment (which, as MacDonald rightly explains, is the main target area of the new legislation) there will still be conciliation through the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). Moreover, in this area the black worker is likely to be entirely on his own, since legal aid will not be available and shop stewards (but not union officials) may be able to deny assistance with impunity. And MacDonald shows, in a careful analysis of the way in which industrial tribunals have treated black workers under other legislation, that these guardians of the industrial scene can be expected to do their utmost to ignore racial aspects of disputes and otherwise limit the effectiveness of the Act.

What, then, of the new Commission for Racial Equality, which replaces both the RRB and the Community Relations Commission? The 'strategic' powers of this body have been much heralded, but a careful reading of MacDonald's book indicates that the CRE's role will

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\*Excerpts of which appeared in *Race & Class* (Vol. XVIII, no. 4, 1977)



still be essentially educational, albeit of a more compulsory nature than before. To take one example, the CRE will be able to impose Codes of Practice on employers, virtually instructing them on how they should behave towards their black workers. But as MacDonald points out, beyond their general educative effect, the main impact of these Codes will be 'in letting employers off the hook of liability for [discriminatory] acts by their employees', thus undermining attempts at individual enforcement.

The new Act is pitted with similar contradictions, there to be exploited by the likes of George Ward and the National Association for Freedom, no doubt with the able and highly-learned assistance of the judiciary. And behind it all lies the major contradiction — that government can escape liability for any discrimination covered by statute (as in the case of immigration law), by simply declaring itself exempt (as in the case of discriminatory fees for overseas students), or on grounds of national security. With such loopholes, no one, least of all the state, should delude themselves that this Act represents a final legislative solution to the management of racism in Britain.

University of Birmingham

LEE BRIDGES

*Cultural Bases of Racism and Group Oppression: an examination of traditional 'western' concepts, values and institutional structures which support racism, sexism and elitism*

By J.L. HODGE, D.K. STRUCKMAN, and L. DORLAND TROST  
(Berkeley, Two Riders Press, 1976). 273pp. \$3.85

You know that ad. — 'Every woman needs her Daily Mail'? A woman perched prettily on the office desk, flirting with knowledge and information in her newspaper — but only enough to make her bird-brain more appealing to her man. Or that one on television for cigarettes or sweets with all those hollering tribesmen in their warpaint — the naked savage, the dark, the rhythmic, the irrational?

The images are familiar enough, as are their roles in reinforcing the stereotypes that serve to justify sexism and racism. This is partly what this book is about, except Hodge et al. dwell not on banal examples, but on the whole western cultural tradition that lies behind them.

The key concept in the book is that of 'dualism' — the assumption that the world can be divided into 'Good' forces and 'Evil'. With the former is identified 'the Mind': rational thought, intellectual work, regulated action, 'culture'. Standing opposed to this is 'the Body': irrationality, intuitive feeling, emotion, sensuality, manual labour, spontaneous behaviour, 'nature'. The political implications of this come from the fact that in western hierarchical thought, not only are

these two categories seen as 'Higher' and 'Lower', but the superior, for the good of the individual and society, must control and dominate the inferior by the exercise of its rational will. It is blacks, women and the working class who have been assigned to the lower category, thus underpinning their oppression by the white male elite.

Hodge borrows a great deal from *Soul on Ice*, showing how this dualism runs through Cleaver's analysis of race, sex and class. But the most interesting and original sections of the book trace the development of the dualist concept through major figures in western culture. Plato, St Augustine, Luther, Calvin and the whole weight of Christian tradition. Finally, a trenchant critique of Freud suggests that his analysis of the development and structure of the psyche — male and female, 'civilized' and 'primitive' — rests on the kind of dualism outlined above. The logic of this is the inevitability and legitimacy of control at all levels of society by the white middle-class male.

The problem with the book arises out of the role assigned to these 'dualist' concepts and beliefs. Often they are said to 'help cause and sustain group oppression'. Such formulas are fine — ideology is not, after all, a mere reflection of economic and political relations; it reproduces them, and can act as a causative agent in its own right. But elsewhere the writers maintain that these ideas are indeed the 'foundation', the 'basic cause' of oppression which is 'a consequence of value-choices ingrained within the culture'. What about the opposition between the ownership of capital and the sale of labour power? This is mentioned, but sneaks in as another result of 'the undemocratic social organisation which exists as a result of mind-body dualism'.

The section by Lyn Trost on racism, though clearly well-intentioned, falls right into this trap. She has good material on the history of white perceptions of blacks, religious attitudes and sexual stereotypes. But 'racism' she defines in terms of 'negative attitudes' towards blacks, and 'beliefs' in their inheritable inferiority. Ignoring economic factors, the march of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, genocide and racism is reduced to a metaphysical problem of controlling 'Evil' by the (European) 'Good'. Now this may well be an important ideological element; racism operates on many levels simultaneously. But its weakness as analysis is revealed by her 'working model' to combat racism. What this boils down to is that if only whites would be more self-aware about their reactions to 'blackness', and try to be nicer people, then all would be well.

Similarly, the conclusion to the book is shaped by idealism in both senses of the word — naive optimism stemming from an over-emphasis on values and beliefs. Social change, we are exhorted, requires 'cultural transformation'. Liberated friendships, communal living, free schools, consumer co-ops — we must 'build alternative and life patterns which are healthy and strong enough to remain



standing while the exploitative institutions of dualist culture begin to crumble from their own inadequacies and internal contradictions'. Presumably capital, too, will bend before this post-dualist paradise.

It's a pity that the writers didn't stick to a history of the ideology of inequality, and its current manipulation. On this they have interesting things to say.

London

HERMIONE HARRIS

### *The IQ Controversy*

Edited by NED BLOCK and GERALD DWORKIN (London, Quartet Books, 1977). 559pp. £8.95

According to the 'blurb', this book is 'the first balanced attempt to portray systematically a controversy which has split education and psychology for over half a century'. Though it is by no means the first such attempt, it is probably as balanced and as systematic as the editors could get in this conceptual and ideological battlefield. There is a good deal of redundancy, some repetition, sometimes a point made succinctly in one place only to be fudged in another, and vice versa, but overall an impression is gained that within is the body of the IQ controversy. This book delivers what is promised.

It is important because it approximates at least an academic closure to a debate which future generations will see as both bizarre and scandalous. For over a century, from Galton to Jensen and Eysenck, the same pseudo-science has prevailed, 'proving' that capitalism, especially in its imperialist/colonialist dimension, reflects a biological, a natural, hierarchy. And the ideology disguised as science has been remarkably successful. The status quo has remained unassailable, and has acquired a cloak of legitimacy it could not otherwise have achieved. In a past era the poor simply thought they were sinful; now, thanks to IQ testing, they believe they are dumb.

From the first attempts to construct tests in the USA to the present day, IQ theory has been inextricably connected with Nordic worship, elitism and racism. Initially it meant the widespread passing of eugenic sterilization laws (in thirty-four states; many thousands of operations performed, the majority on immigrants), and the institution of an immigration quota system, to which the self same IQ theorists were chief scientific advisers. Today, it means Arthur Jensen's recommendation that working-class children (especially blacks) should have an education trimmed to meet their test-proven deficiency in 'conceptual learning'; and William Shockley's cash-incentive scheme for voluntary sterilization of blacks (in order to prevent a downgrading of our genetic pool). In the last twenty years

(as the horrors of Nazism, a kindred philosophy, have faded), the movement has surged forward more audaciously than ever, flushed with its new tests, fresh data and more statistics.

Until quite recently the *résistance* was puny. But as Vince Houghton and John Daniels once pointed out, we are really indebted to Jensen and Eysenck: they have clearly spelled out the damning consequences of the psychometric view of human beings. Above all they have provoked on several fronts a thorough scientific appraisal of the whole shoddy business. Many of these responses are drawn together for the first time in this book: Kamin's critical dismantling of the heritability data (and the jiggery-pokery that went into them); Lewontin's attack on the genetic mythology; and Block and Dworkin's exposure of the scientific pretensions of IQ testing when they show that such tests cannot be measuring intelligence, that group differences are built into the test, that test scores correlate with nothing worth mentioning outside of school grades, that neither correlate with adult achievements, and so on. In sum, not only is IQ theory devoid of theory in any scientific sense, but also its basic practical claims do not stand up to empirical analysis.

There are many such papers, hammering these points home, interspersed among the representations of the main IQ theorists. But there are drawbacks to all this. The first concerns readability. The defects of repetition and redundancy, coupled with conceptual and terminological inconsistency, impart an unevenness to the book. The second concerns the price. Fair perhaps for over twenty chapters and a dozen or so miscellaneous passages, but it must put the book far beyond the reach of numerous potential readers. This all suggests some pruning — and the slightly irritating impression is that this could quite easily have been achieved. For example, the forty pages devoted to the Terman-Lippmann debate of 1923 are mainly of historical interest, the elements of which are concisely summarized in other chapters; and much terse argument is repeated with more thoroughness and clarity in Block and Dworkin's own chapter, itself stretching over 140 pages. But in spite of this, the presentation of all that material in one book is an invaluable contribution. It will not of course halt the whole discreditable enterprise of IQ testing, but readers of this book might at least get an inkling of why exposure at a mere academic level is not sufficient to halt it. The scientific argument is over; the ideological one must be confronted for what it is. And in that we all have a part to play.

Milton Keynes

K. RICHARDSON



*Racial Equality in America*

By JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1976). 113pp. \$7.95.

*Racism, Revolution, Reaction, 1961-1877: the rise and fall of Radical Reconstruction*

By PETER CAMEJO (New York, Monad Press, 1976). 269pp. Cloth £7.70, paper £2.20.

The importance of Marxism as a methodology, as a way of looking at and explaining events, is highlighted in a comparison of these two books. One, *Racial Equality in America*, written by the John Matthews Manly Distinguished Service Professor of History at the University of Chicago, John Hope Franklin, represents the work of a distinguished, non-Marxist, black historian. The book is the text of the 1976 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities Presented by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is literate, concerned and challenges the United States to recognize that equality is indivisible. The other, *Racism, Revolution, Reaction, 1861-1877*, is written by the 1976 Presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party. It is a Marxist analysis of the rise, fall, nature and meaning of Radical Reconstruction.

The Franklin volume is well-written and is full of apt quotes revealing the racist attitudes of political, religious and intellectual leaders. Its theme is the historic denial of equality to the Afro-American people. There is, however, no concrete discussion of the reasons for this denial other than racial antagonism and political cowardice. Nor is there a serious discussion of the reasons for shifts in state action or whether this denial of equality was/is functional for the maintenance of the political/economic system. Here, in my view, lies the crucial omission which fatally limits the usefulness of this volume.

There is no discussion of the development of industrial capitalism and later of monopoly capitalism and the consequences of these developments for blacks. For example, in his four pages of discussion of Reconstruction there is not a single mention of the rise to power of industrial capitalists and their reasons for supporting, and later abandoning, Radical Reconstruction. Without such a discussion we have no basis for understanding what occurred and why.

Similarly, in his third and final chapter, 'Equality indivisible', he states: 'Few developments have affected the movement for racial equality more than the assumption of some responsibility by government itself.' He then goes on to list a series of Executive Orders, Civil Rights Acts and Supreme Court decisions. But why this assumption of responsibility and how meaningful was it? He incorrectly states, for example, that 'President Kennedy, by executive order, ended racial

discrimination in federally supported housing'. It is true that after more than two years in office, Kennedy issued such an executive order. But, it dealt only with federally subsidized housing to be built in the future, leaving untouched over \$100 billion worth of such housing already constructed and 98 per cent occupied by whites. In addition, there were so many loopholes in the order itself that it was possible to drive a housing estate through them.

Camejo, on the other hand, confronts these problems in the course of a comprehensive treatment of the period 1861-77. Because he understands the necessity of analysing the material base of history, he situates Radical Reconstruction within the economic and political structure of the United States at that time. He relates the specific to the general and thus enhances our understanding of both. Of the rise of Radical Reconstruction he writes:

Radical Reconstruction came into being because of the need of the industrial capitalists to consolidate political control. To achieve this they needed an alliance with the Afro-American people and thus extended democratic rights to them. The struggle of Afro-Americans for their social well-being and political rights, the general post-war radicalization, and the internal dynamic of a Republican machine seeking to perpetuate its role were all contributing factors in the rise of Radical Reconstruction ...

But Radical Reconstruction was itself a half-way measure. It called for bourgeois democratic rights for Afro-Americans juridically and electorally but opposed a land reform. Thus from the start it had a built-in contradiction. It gave Blacks legal rights without the economic basis upon which these rights could be exercised and defended. Moreover, while solving an urgent problem for the industrial capitalists — government power — Radical Reconstruction left the South's 'labour problem' unsolved.

Camejo thus deals with the variety of factors involved but within a framework which explains their inter-relationship and priority of importance. One criticism which I feel should be made is that he sometimes underestimates the degree to which racial antagonism had become part of the ideology of whites in the North and West as well as in the South. This leads him to make assertions which I am not sure are justified. For example:

There was still [circa 1874] broad sympathy for the rights of Southern Blacks. That is proven by the effectiveness of the Republican Campaign technique of waving the bloody shirt. It was used successfully to win electors well into the 1880's, after Radical Reconstruction had ended ...

It is not certain that the partisan political success of the 'bloody shirt' proves sympathy for Southern blacks. It might more centrally



represent latent antagonism towards the former enemy, Southern whites. We must understand the importance and continuation of racist attitudes as part of the culture of the white working class if we are to successfully combat them.

Despite this criticism, I feel that Peter Camejo has written a useful volume which illuminates the Afro-American experience to a far greater extent than does Professor Franklin. He also raises important political questions for our consideration at the present time.

University of Manchester

LOUIS KUSHNICK

*Torture and Resistance in Iran: memories of the woman guerrilla A. Dehghani,*

Translated and published by THE IRAN COMMITTEE (London, 1976). £1.30

*Iran: the Shah's empire of repression*

Committee Against Repression in Iran, (London, CARI, 1976). 39pp. price 30p

*Workers of Iran: repression and the fight for democratic trade unions*

By T. JALIL, (London, 1976). Campaign for the Restoration of Trade Union Rights in Iran, 59pp.

*Iran*

Amnesty International Briefing (London, AI, November 1976). 12pp. 40p

The publication in English of three pamphlets and a book in 1976, all in one way or another related to the situation of political prisoners in Iran and the struggle against the repressive regime of the Shah, is a most welcome development. For too long, the medium through which the image of Iran had been constructed in this country was limited to the articles written by journalists travelling to Iran, interviews granted by His Majesty the King of Kings and, on rare occasions, reports on torture in Iranian prisons, as noted in *Iran: the Shah's empire of repression*.

Although no less barbaric and oppressive than the military regime in Chile, or Franco's fascist dictatorship in Spain, few people in the West know much about the Shah's dictatorship. And this is despite the interest that has recently developed in Iran as one of the major oil producing countries. The cause of this is undoubtedly the regime's ceaseless efforts to hide its ugly face behind a mask of favourable propaganda. In these efforts the Shah's regime has found much of the Western media, particularly in Britain, to be

helpful and reliable allies. While refraining from publishing facts that reveal the real nature of the Iranian regime, the Western media have frequently propagated an image that the regime itself wishes to present: that of a dynamic regime led by an energetic and clever, if perhaps somewhat authoritarian ruler, which is using the country's oil wealth to industrialise and build Iran up into a 'Japan' of the Middle East.

All the publications under review serve to destroy the myth and help build a campaign against repression in Iran. Each of them approaches the problem from a different angle. Dehghani's memoirs are unique in the sense that they are the only extensive account given by a former prisoner of her ordeal: arrest, torture, imprisonment ... and escape. Many of the details of the tortures she describes have been reported previously and also documented in the Amnesty International briefing. What is most moving, however, is her description of the fears she experiences in the initial stages of torture, fears not of physical pain and suffering, but of what must be the most terrifying question of all: will I keep my mouth shut under torture?

I could see Eypak's hand, deeply cut with a sickle, yet not nursed because the work had to go on. I would think of the acute backache that plagued Robab and Reihan. Yet they had to irrigate their tiny piece of barren land with their hands. I had before my eyes the sufferings of Golnar, the tears of Zahra, the sincerity of Ghorban, the innocence and childish happiness of Marzan who would run to me shouting 'Aunt Ashraf' in the rags that were her clothes. I could remember that every time watching her unwitting joy, I would think of the agony and humiliation waiting to swamp her, to degrade her and to ruin her life. I could remember how my heart bursting with sorrow ... and choking with hatred of those who bring about so much misery, I would smile at her, caress her, and vow in my heart: 'I shall fight for your freedom and that of all those others like you, chained by the oppressors.' Now I could see their anxious faces before my eyes. With every stroke of the whip I would call their names. I was trying to assure them, in fact to assure myself, that I would keep my pledge.

In page after page she recounts the minute details of the tortures, her own reactions, and those of the SAVAK torturers when faced with the failure of extracting information from her.

This book alone is absolute condemnation of the Shah's regime. Amnesty's briefing is also useful as it documents the situation of political prisoners in Iran, estimated between 25,000 and 100,000, with the highest rate of political execution in the world. But however useful the report, Amnesty's intention of remaining 'neutral' and 'above politics' makes it incapable of explaining why such violations



of elementary human rights occur in Iran and how most effectively they can be fought.

*Iran: the Shah's empire of repression* deals comprehensively with these questions, stressing Britain's complicity, and hence the need for an effective campaign here. It briefly analyses the role of the Iranian regime, regionally and internationally within the context of the 'free world'. It points out how the very character of the so-called 'industrial development' of Iran necessitates and perpetuates a police dictatorship, and why a regime like that of the Shah's cannot rule through bourgeois-democratic mediations, through the ideological persuasion and control of the mass of population, but only through brute force. It also points out the sub-imperialist role of the Shah's army *vis-à-vis* mass movements in neighbouring countries, as in its use against the Dhofari revolutionaries in Oman and more recently against the Baluchis in Pakistan. It documents the international extension of SAVAK's activities, in European countries in particular, aided directly or indirectly by the political police in many of these countries. However, the most important point it makes is that a fight back against repression in Iran and against SAVAK activities in Britain is necessary *not simply* out of humanitarian concern, not even simply out of revolutionary duty, but because here and now it concerns the material interests of the student and labour movement in Britain.

As both this pamphlet and *Workers of Iran* show, the lack of democratic rights in Iran, the atomization of workers there, has a direct impact on the labour movement in imperialist countries. It is undeniable that the lack of workers' organizations, the low wages and poor living conditions enable the multinationals to move with ease selected labour intensive low-skill manufacturing units from countries with well-organized workers' movements to countries like Iran.

One can only hope that the strong case made in this literature for the necessity of a united fight-back against the Iranian regime, coupled with the practical initiatives already begun, will succeed in building a broad campaign against the Shah, will succeed in taking this fight into the labour movement, into the student movement, and will succeed in uniting it with others engaged in similar struggles in this country against racism, against women's oppression and against all the different faces of class oppression.

London

GOLI MUSAVI

*God's Shadow*

By REZA BARAHENI (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1976). 103pp. £6.70

Poetry is an affirmation of the possible. It celebrates life, its delights, sorrows and value. Affirmation is best when sung with passion and wit. Celebration needs to be individual and collective; immediate and soaked with a sense of the past. When poems are written out of a cogent Marxist ideology and/or in opposition to a repressive, exploitative society, celebration can be fired by a spirit of practical revolution: a driving force for change that, by affirming the possible and recording its violation, ferments discontent and implies the need for struggle. *God's Shadow* is such an affirmation — and force for change.

*Race & Class* readers will already know basic facts about Iran — the many thousands of political prisoners, the luxury gardens specially landscaped for the Shah with plants flown in from all over the world, the wealth and power accumulated, and the repression that maintains economic and social oppression by the government machine and capitalist investment. The situation is well-documented in the books and pamphlets published by the Committee against Repression in Iran, Amnesty, the Iran Committee, etc, all of which are worth reading.

So too is *God's Shadow*. Baraheni's poems also express the systematic exploitation and repression of the Iranian people, as well as reflecting, in a more personal way, Baraheni's own prison experiences.

In his introduction to the poems Baraheni says:

The Iranian mind, beating to the rhythm of musical words, is a great reservoir of images ... The prisoner doesn't consider this poetry something very personal; he thinks of it as collective ... imbued with collective fears and hopes.

The best poems in *God's Shadow* exemplify this:

The Shah is holding the oil in his hand like a glass of wine  
drinking to the health of the West

And the Queen with her thick lips milks the tits of Motherland's  
doe

at night under the stars

in the day in the passage of sun

every month every year

And a glove the colour of blood remains on the snows of St.  
Moritz.

—An Epic in Reverse

A panoramic view of Iran's oppression is reinforced by more personalized close-ups of poverty, torture, brutality:



he sleeps on his heart and on his knees  
 he arches his back  
 and purrs with pain  
 the puss and blood stick his ass to his shorts and to his pants.

—Barbecue

Descriptions like this work best when given a wider historical perspective:

our civilization, 2,500 years old  
 has given Mamad Ali  
 2,500 days in prison  
 for reading a forbidden book  
 and still this civilisation  
 thinks of more and more  
 profitable percentages.

—A Twentieth-century Percentage

Language is sensual, clear, incisive, often sharpened by violence  
 —or wit:

mother's face resembles a Tibetan miniature  
 found in Tashkent  
 and sold in Chicago

—Answers to an Interrogation

Elsewhere long lines have a quality of incantation. (The translation from Persian is largely by Baraheni himself, but one should be able to read the original to do justice to diction, word-play and cadence.)

Above all, there is passion — a driving affirmation of life that chooses to *sing* outrage and thereby vocalize a creative will for change:

the nightingale that taught us to sing in the ruins  
 the nightingale that taught us saying woe woe upon us  
 the nightingale that deflowered her own voice and began singing  
 the nightingale that opened the lips of being  
 has been murdered ...  
 the nightingale that taught us to sing in the ruins

—Lamentation

If you wish to see me, look into the pit  
 of an oil well from the summit of Everest  
 throw your matches down  
 so that I can set the whole world aflame

—I am an underground man

It might be argued that Baraheni would be more effective as a fire-lighter were he to have stayed in Iran, to sing his songs on the streets

and thus, inevitably, behind bars. To have his poems published elsewhere, however, is useful kindling, especially for a British audience fed on a soggy, compromised, liberal poetic tradition that won't catch light at all. Baraheni may have, for the moment, finished up in an American university, but the poetry speaks to a different audience in a different place:

...I am not fit for textbooks  
for schools and universities

...  
I am an underground man  
my fire alone shall appear on the face of the earth.

—ibid.

London

SUE LOEWENSTEIN

### *Colonial Urban Development*

By ANTHONY KING (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976). 328pp. Cloth £7.50.

This book suffers from innumerable faults. It is written in the tortuous style and impenetrable language of so much modern sociology — where fifteen words are used when three will do, and no term or concept can be employed without endless definition and explanation. At one point we are even given two whole paragraphs on why some words are placed in quotations and others not. The book is also made up of a series of journal articles which, although on the same basic theme, have been written over a number of years, and this results in constant repetition. Finally, the production process used, with the print taken direct from the author's type-script, makes for difficult reading. Never have the skills of an editor and typesetter been more needed.

Nevertheless, the theme of the book — colonial urban development — is an important one. King's claim is that the colonial city was not just a product of the demands of the metropolitan power, although the factor of domination was always present. Nor did it represent the meeting of two cultures — metropolitan and indigenous. Instead, he claims that the colonial city was the physical and social expression of a unique colonial third culture, made up of the civil, military and commercial representatives of the metropolitan power resident in the colonial society. King traces out the development of this culture in great detail, first by examining the constituent parts of the colonial city (cantonment, bungalow compound, hill station),



and then through a historical case study of New Delhi. The book is full of fascinating insights; the pity is that one is forced through a mire of sociological jargon to find them.

King stops his analysis at the end of the colonial period, with the excuse that the post-independence development of the colonial city is best left to be examined by indigenous scholars. In King's case this excuse is probably legitimate, for one senses throughout the book that his imagination, which has enabled him to reconstruct the world of the colonists so well, could not be stretched to comprehend either the colonized peoples and their culture or the realities of neo-colonialism. Moreover, some of King's strictures about the fallacy of applying western planning theories and technology to third world cities are more than justified.

Still, there are important questions to be asked about post-colonial urban development. Can the urban forms and structures created in the colonial period be maintained; Is it possible to transform them to new purposes and to breathe into them new meanings? Or will the very effort of doing so have the effect of reinforcing relations of dependency? Could it be that the only path open to real independence lies, as in Cambodia, in the dismantling of the colonial city (if not its indigenous element)? And what price will need to be paid in terms of social and political dislocation in order to achieve this end? These questions constitute a part of the harsh realities facing third world societies, and hopefully others less immersed in the language and theories of western sociology will not choose to avoid them.

University of Birmingham

LEE BRIDGES

### *Race Relations: elements and dynamics*

By OLIVER CROMWELL COX (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1976) 302pp.

Cox was preparing the manuscript of this book for publication when he died in September 1974. Wayne State Press's editors in completing the work have preserved Cox's combative forthright style: one recalls that this style was not confined to the printed page, for an informal debate on capitalism at an American learned society's conference ended in 'a stand-off between Cox and the loquacious Alvin Gouldner'. [1] Endearing anecdotes like this apart, Cox will be remembered for his prodigious output of scholarly texts and articles amongst which must be placed *Race Relations*. But as a valedictory address it is an unworthy piece.

Cox himself writes here that previously he had nibbled at contrary theories such as caste, pluralism, black bourgeoisie, Marxism, etc., but now intends to present a distinct theory of race relations

encompassing 'The universal manifestations of race relations and their functions, especially in the United States'. Perhaps therefore he had an awareness of the text's status as a finale to his considerable output. But does Cox depart on a crescendo, a rousing chord? Hardly.

The let-down, partly, is of our own doing. One had been led to believe, both by his detractors and his admirers, that Cox was a Marxist, the first black Marxist to analyse race relations in terms of capital and of class relations. As one of that small group of pioneering black writers and sociologists in the company of E. Franklin Frazier, W.E.B. Dubois, Drake and Cayton, he blazed a trail through the cant of dominant sociology which intentionally, or more charitably, uncomprehendingly obscured the real, the true content and substance of relations between black and white beneath a psychological apparition. Cox, one believed, was the man to tell it like it was. He was the man to flesh out Marxism with a perspective on race relations, cutting through the mystification of Myrdal and his ilk. His great work *Caste, Class and Race* stood alone as a Marxist analysis.

So what of this text and Cox's intention to set out a distinct comparative theory of race relations? Cox argues that given racial rejection and the relatively static nature of black working class and lumpen proletariat social status structures, a phenomenon unknown to other American ethnic groups, the exclusion of the black group from American mainstream institutions produces a major division in society on a *cultural level*. Cox puts it thus: 'The relatively lower status base with its tradition of permanence has engendered elements of lower class cultural idealism which establish their own vicious circle inimical to efforts toward inclusion in the mainstream culture.'

The existence of distinct ethnic cultural forms and traditions cannot be doubted and Cox presents fascinating illustrations from black social movements in contemporary America. Chapters on Negro protest and the sub-culture, nationalist leadership, the police and alienation, the question of anarchy, sections on the Black Muslims, Malcolm X and Garvey, are thrown together in rough-cut newspaper items, snatches of speeches, reports, anecdotes.

But what of the theoretical basis of all this? Unless one argues that the cultural forms of capitalist society have a relative autonomy or an existence independent of other social processes and structures, as Cox appears to do, one must be prepared at least to acknowledge if not specify the nature and content of their relationship to the rest of society's institutions. These cultural elements may be distinct, they may be long-standing, but to say that they are explicable by reference to 'the permanence of tradition' merely pushes the explanation chronologically back in time. What sustains these cultural elements? What relationship do they have to the concrete struggles in society



over the disposition of power, status and wealth? That Cox does not approach these questions systematically is curious given that he regards 'the economics of race relations as crucial. Economics involves pivotally the differentiating forces in our type of society' (p.1). But by the end of the book Cox — or maybe his editor? — is denying any truck with Marx's economics or Marxism. He writes 'acceptance of [Marx's] essentially erroneous analysis of the nature of capitalism and the process of its transition has been costly both materially and psychically to many of those caught in the currents of revolutionary situations' (p292).

What then holds the book together? The outstanding unifying thread, perhaps the only one, is a vigorous rejection of the legitimacy of contemporary developments in black struggles, their theory and their leadership in the United States: Malcolm X is denounced for his 'spurious alienated ideology', Amilcar Cabral's *Revolution in Guinea* is called 'a mystical interpretation of social change which is likely to fascinate some Negroes looking for instant solutions to the problems of race relations in the United States'; ghetto uprisings he considers to be 'anarchistic'.

If no way out exists for black people in the politics of Garvey, H Rap Brown, Huey Newton, Cleaver or DuBois, wherein does it lay? The only clue one has is contained in the despairing penultimate section 'There must be some way out' and finally 'New theories and agendas'. Here one catches the overwhelming sense of defeat signified by Cox's insistence that one surrenders to the vast implacable forces of unification and assimilation which unhelped have chugged along juggernaut fashion. Cox writes: 'Since the early sixteenth century, under the powerful and *irreversible pressures* of capitalist culture, the whole world entered a process of unification and assimilation' (p.302, my emphasis).

The only way out for black people is to enter into the larger movement for social change in mainstream American society, and hence self-consciously identify themselves as patriotic Americans. Cox therefore strikes a distinctly un-Marxist note in the closing pages of his final work and Marxists will howl at the betrayal. But in a sense we should not do so. Even in the monumental *Caste, Class and Race* upon which his Marxist reputation rests, he equivocates. All the barriers erected against presenting a Marxist interpretation loom large before him, yet he sees the force of Marxist arguments and confesses, perhaps reluctantly, 'we have not discovered any other ideas that could explain the facts so consistently'. Perhaps in the end Cox's Marxist reputation is to be understood in a strictly contemporaneous American setting. In the America of 1949 even Cox's statement that the social scientist should be 'passionately in favour of the welfare of the people and against the interests of the few when they seem to submerge that welfare' could appear radical. But Marxist it is not.

Wayne State Press's editors must accept criticism for publishing a confusing, slight text. It is nevertheless a sad curtain on Cox's distinguished career. Perhaps now the canard of Cox the Marxist will be laid to rest.

Sheffield City Polytechnic

STUART BENTLEY

*Southern Africa after Soweto*

By ALEX CALLINICOS and JOHN ROGERS (London, Pluto Press, 1977). 229pp. £2.00

*A Window on Soweto*

By JOYCE SIKAKANE (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1977). 80pp. 80p

The authors of *Southern Africa after Soweto* had taken a four-year study course on the African subcontinent in the Socialist Worker Group, popularly regarded as a semi-Trotskyist political tendency. When Soweto shook South Africa and attracted world-wide attention last year, they came to the conclusion that they were sufficiently qualified to write with authority on that vast region. The result is a book which examines the complexities of southern Africa's political economy, which passes stern judgments on and issues *pronunciamientos* to the liberation movements operating there.

The centrepiece of their economic argument, rather well-known to South African marxists, is that apartheid is the indispensable pendant to capitalist super-exploitation. From this the political conclusion is drawn that the struggle against apartheid is at the same time one against capitalism. As a consequence, they reject the two-stage theory of revolution, and conclude that the revolution can succeed only by putting the black workers in power. Even so, the authors insist that 'the ultimate survival and success of a revolution in South Africa will depend on revolutions in the advanced countries' — a view which leads them to adopt an air of imperialist paternalism to black revolutionaries.

Cast in the mould of classical marxism, they insist that the various struggles in southern Africa need to develop according to their European prescription. Accordingly, urban and rural guerrilla warfare in South Africa is definitely out: workers' insurrection in the cities holds the key to the seizure of power.

The book condemns the various liberation movements for their espousal of African nationalism — viewed as a petty bourgeois ideology which, by insisting on the maximum inter-class unity, subordinates the interests of the workers to neo-colonial, because middle-class, demands. The authors assign a hegemonic role to the



urban workers, and stress the centrality of the cities in the revolution.

This is hardly the place to discuss the strategy of people's war in southern Africa. But even if Callinicos and Rogers do sometimes have something useful to say, they are in no political and moral position to issue directives to, and least of all to influence developments in, that region. Naturally enough, people who are engaged in the task of overthrowing a social system draw inspiration from and learn the lessons of past revolutions. More important, though, is the task of building up a political theory, of developing a revolutionary culture in the crucible of revolutionary *praxis* — a task which involves the synthesis of marxism and the native traditions of a country. The authors are certainly not qualified or in a position to help in the execution of this task.

*A Window on Soweto* is a sensitive piece of writing by a black woman journalist on her life in that great African township. She describes how blacks are treated as fugitives in the land of their birth, having to show pass books as proof that they can live in the ghetto and move about in search of work.

Joyce Sikakane worked as a journalist and was detained for seventeen months under the Terrorism Act. On her release she was banned and therefore unable to resume her profession. In 1973, when she realized that the police were suspecting her of engaging in illegal political activity, she left the country and settled in Britain.

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