RACE & CLASS

Eurocentrism

in the social sciences

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Eurocentrism in the social sciences

Ethnocentrism, of which Eurocentrism is a special case, refers to 'the tendency to view one's own ethnic group and its social standards as the basis for evaluative judgements concerning the practices of others – with the implication that one views one's own standards as superior'.[1] On the face of it, no reasonable person would see such an academic approach as justifiable. Yet European ideas and concepts* have had such an extraordinary effect in the last hundred years that Eurocentrism has, in varying degrees, permeated all social science disciplines. This should not be seen as a phenomenon in isolation. It grew out of the historical process of western colonial and economic dominance and has, in turn, provided an ideological justification for that dominance. The categories and approaches used in European academia help to maintain the political and intellectual superiority of Europe. The continuing presence of such academic constructs is a by-product of a widespread Eurocentric bias in the production, dissemination and evaluation of knowledge. The persistence of Eurocentrism has had the following effects:

(i) It has damaged non-European societies through the 'colonisation' of their intellectuals.

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*Although we use the terms Europe and European, our intention is to refer primarily to Britain and North America, and not parts of Europe such as Russia and Central Europe, which have had a very different history and intellectual tradition.

Race & Class, 31(4), (1990)

(ii) It has impoverished the academic disciplines themselves which remain unaware of alternative sources of knowledge outside mainstream development.

(iii) It functions, regardless of intention, to legitimate international systems of inequality.

In earlier works, we investigated the operation of such bias in history, mathematics, psychology and social anthropology.[2] Here we examine its presence in three social science disciplines: psychology, economics and social anthropology.* These illustrate some important differences in the way Eurocentric biases enter each discipline.

Because the separation of these disciplines has permeated most academic institutions today, this article reluctantly follows the disciplinary divides. However, one of its purposes is to argue against a rigid compartmentalisation of academic disciplines. At both a cognitive level (through creating a more integrated approach) and at a practical level (where a little knowledge of social anthropology, for instance, can avoid the absurdities of development economics), we believe that breaking down the barriers between disciplines can lead to breaking down Eurocentrism.

The powerful influence of 'discipline-centrism' is well illustrated by the three distinctly different initial concerns which led to this study. We did not realise at the beginning of our collaboration that what we interpreted as Eurocentrism in each of the three disciplines, meant different things to each one of us. In economics, more than the other two disciplines, it was the European biases, ignorance, insensitivity and unconcern about social and cultural differences that were matters of primary concern. In psychology, a rather more subtle level of bias persists through the continued maintenance of certain metaphysical assumptions embedded in the European philosophical tradition of abstract individualism and universalism. Social anthropology could hardly be attacked for ignoring cultural differences. The discipline may be guilty of the opposite type of bias: the maintenance of superiority through a reluctance to universalise. At the risk of oversimplification, we identify three key concepts – inappropriate

*The biases present in sociology, particularly in concepts such as modernisation and traditionalism, or in political science, in the analysis of institutional adaptations to different social environments, have been well documented.[3] Nonetheless, a curious reluctance to acknowledge contributions from outside the European traditions is widespread in western academia. Little acknowledgement is made, for example, to the pioneering sociological contribution of the fourteenth-century scholar Ibn Khaldun of North Africa, or the the remarkable similarities between Kautiliya's *Arthasastra* (an Indian manual on state craft composed around 300 BC) and Machiavelli's *Prince* or of the work of Chinese political theorists from the seventh century BC onwards, especially the contribution of the legalist school which paid a lot of attention to *Shu*, which can be translated as statecraft.

universalism, individualism and excessive particularism – in the analysis of Eurocentrism in the social sciences. The first two, mixed in different proportions, characterise economics and psychology and the third belongs to social anthropology.

Eurocentrism in economics

The imperial legacy

All ideologies that emanate from the powerful have no difficulty recruiting scholars to provide the gloss. During the heyday of imperialism, the scholar was useful not only in constructing a conceptual framework within which colonial ideology could be defended and extended, but in helping to select problems for investigation which highlighted the beneficial effects of colonial rule. In some cases, economists working for the government were perhaps unaware of the ideological functions of their work; in many others, the political implications and exploitative intentions were clearly obvious. For example, the Kikuyu of Kenya were being encouraged to grow coffee rather than maize around the same time as the Malays were being discouraged from planting rubber and encouraged to concentrate on cultivating rice. In the two cases, the reason given was similar: the farmers would be better off if they followed the prescriptions. But the motivation was different in each case. In the Malayan case, the volume of rubber production had to be controlled to safeguard the profit margins of European plantation owners and/or avoid rice imports that would be needed if there was a significant shift from rice to rubber cultivation. In the case of the Kikuyu, who had to share their land with the white settlers, the need to bring them into the money economy, as either labourers or small producers of cash crops, was felt to be paramount.

Colonial education contributed to the creation of a false consciousness among the colonised. An important part of the strategy of domination was to convince the colonised that knowledge, whether in the sphere of culture, science or technology, could be acquired only through the mediation of the colonial rulers. This belief still remains strong in post-colonial societies faced every day with the demonstration of the marvels of western science and technology. A consequence of this uncritical perception is the emergence of the phenomenon of 'intellectual captivity' among the educated elite in the former colonial cultures. These 'captive' minds, often products of higher educational institutions in the West, exhibit certain characteristics that seem to cut across national boundaries. A tendency to uncritical imitation pervades almost the whole of the scientific activity in a number of poor countries. All major constituents of such activity, including problem setting, analysis, abstraction, generalisation, conceptualisation,

description, explanation and interpretation, are affected by this process. Consider an actual example from a South Asian country. An economist returns with a PhD qualification in public finance from a western university. He is set the task of improving the system of collecting and administering taxes from a widely dispersed community of rural inhabitants. Faced by the lack of even a basic administrative infrastructure such as is taken for granted in the country in which he was trained, he becomes painfully aware of the wide gap between the theoretical knowledge that he acquired overseas and the world of experience in his own country. The stage is set for imaginative adaptation of theory to practice. But often such a critical awareness is not a prelude to any creative thought. Even what would appear as a fairly obvious need to adapt a western-style tax system to take account of the cultural norms of his people may escape him. He plans a system of tax allowances appropriate for a conjugal family unit rather than a joint family system. Instead of married person and child allowances, what is required in a society where aged parents stay with their children, who are their social security in their old age, is a 'grandparents' tax allowance. Thus, intellectual captivity in this instance is marked by unthinking imitation of the West, an incapacity to raise and solve original problems and a failure to generate concepts which are relevant and productive in the local context. These problems are further accentuated in many countries by the lack of attention or interest in the creation of an intellectual peer group and other vehicles to scrutinise and evaluate indigenous scholarship. Instead, legitimisation of research and publication of original findings remain very much a western monopoly.

Intellectual captivity can take another form: the neglect of sources outside European tradition and scholarship. Consider the work of Ibn Khaldun as an illustration. Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis in 1337 and died in Cairo in 1406. His fame rests on a three-volume text entitled *Muqaddimah* (or 'Introduction to history')[4] in which he 'conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been produced by any mind in any time or place'.[5]

The most original feature of his work, from the point of view of an economist, is his study of the underlying causes of underdevelopment. The Maghreb of Ibn Khaldun's time was not an underdeveloped area. On the contrary, it occupied an important position in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern trade, controlling the gold routes to the western Sudan. For most of the Middle Ages, Sudanese gold was the main source of precious metal for the merchants of the Middle East and much of Europe. In order to obtain it, they imported all kinds of commodities into the Maghreb and, as a result, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries towns grew up whose wealth was out of all

proportion to the wealth of the surrounding countryside. In spite of these favourable conditions, Ibn Khaldun noted signs of social, political and economic stagnation in the region.

It was in his search for the reasons for this that Ibn Khaldun made his original contribution. He identified two main factors which, with historical hindsight and marxian terminology, we would describe as: (i) the lack of a bourgeoisie and (ii) the enduring nature of what Marx labelled the 'Asiatic mode of production' in the Maghreb. It is now generally recognised that the emerging European bourgeoisie was a significant agent for initiating economic development in Europe, being a social class capable of coordinating the means of production and of bringing about fundamental structural transformations by making innovations and investments. A Eurocentric marxist may well argue that historically what are now called underdeveloped countries are those without a bourgeoisie powerful enough to carry out these tasks.

Marx characterised the 'Asiatic mode of production' by the existence of a class capable of appropriating a surplus and exploiting the population without necessarily owning the means of production, which, for the most part, remained in the hands of the village communities. It is a reflection of the quality of Ibn Khaldun's analysis of social structures that he recognised, without seeing the problem in either marxist or global terms, that behind the historical circumstances of the Maghreb, with its sophisticated and extravagant urban life style based on trade and the harsh and poverty stricken rural communities, lay the seeds of its stagnation and decline. And the applicability of Ibn Khaldun's analysis of underdevelopment, 400 years before Marx, for other states in Asia and Africa is now clear. An acquaintance with Ibn Khaldun's work on the historical development of the Maghreb serves as a useful corrective in trying to understand the evolution of all countries in terms of what are sometimes offered as universal marxian categories but are, in fact, based only on European experience: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism

Inappropriate universalism and individualism in economics

With the significant exception of social anthropology, the social sciences in the West attempt to develop general knowledge and universal concepts, which in differing degrees are embedded in European experience and in a philosophical tradition of individualism and universalism. The two traditions of universalism and individualism are, in practice, linked to the same central tendency in the social sciences – that of excluding the 'social' from the domain of, say, the 'purely psychological' or 'purely economic'. In the case of economics, the limits of the domain change with time and fashion. However, we are concerned here with those universalist assumptions, characteristic

of western thought, which affect perceptions of 'other' societies.

An early consequence of inappropriate universalism is seen in the emergence of stereotypes such as the 'backward and lazy native' or, more generally, of static or stagnant non-European cultures devoid of vitality and creativity.* Such stereotypes characterised western scholarship in the early decades of this century. To illustrate, a German scientist, commenting in 1916 on the primitive nature of technology in the Philippines, suggested that the reason why the Filipino fishermen used oars constructed from brittle bamboo poles was to ensure frequent periods of rest while they were being mended! Technical considerations, such as the lightness and pliability of the bamboo for this purpose, were not given serious consideration. The image of the indolent, unacquisitive and backward native is present in many reports of scholars, travellers and administrators of that period. It even gave birth to a new theory, referred to in economic literature as the theory of the 'backward sloping curve of effort'. In its simplest version, it states: pay a worker or peasant farmer more and he would react by reducing his work effort. Less effort would produce the same remuneration, so why bother? The lesson for the colonial capitalist or plantation owner is clear. Keep prices and wages low to ensure an acceptable level of productive efficiency.

Inappropriate universalism applies today particularly in development economics – a peripheral area, in any case, if one examines the contents of most of the basic economics texts. Where these texts refer to the 'Third World', they exhibit a crass ethnocentrism, betraying ignorance of the effects of political and social structures on economic behaviour. Probably as a result, most courses on offer in this field in Anglo-American universities, and taken by large number of students from underdeveloped countries, do not emphasise the need for theoretical reconstruction in responding to marked socioeconomic differences between these countries.

There is a tendency in this area of economics, more than in any other, to discourse in universalist and abstract propositions which are either misleading or of little analytical potential. Take an example from a well-known book, by the Nobel Laureate Kuznets,[6] where comparisons are made between the growth patterns of the developed

*A similar image of the British working class as feckless and lazy existed among the Social Darwinists of the nineteenth century. When taken in conjunction with the Malthusian nightmare of overpopulation, it was only a matter of time before the principle of 'eugenics' or selective breeding became the recommended option for survival. There are close but insufficiently examined links between the growth of racism in the British Empire and the increasing popularity of the eugenics movement which attracted a significant following among the founding fathers of psychology and mathematical statistics, notably Francis Galton (1822-1911) and Karl Pearson (1857-1936).

and underdeveloped worlds. The following propositions appear:

(i) the average per capita product of the underdeveloped countries is significantly lower than that of the developed countries in their pre-industrial phase;

(ii) the per capita agricultural land available is much lower in most underdeveloped countries than in developed countries in their pre-industrial phase; and

(iii) therefore, the lower per capita product in underdeveloped countries – relative to that in the pre-industrial phase of the developed countries – is probably due to the lower productivity of the agricultural sector.

These three propositions are highly speculative in that they have not been empirically verified in any systematic fashion. More important, they belong to a level of generality quite useless for policy analysis. But they do have an impact on the popular perception of traditional agriculture in the poorer world as 'backward' and 'inefficient'.

Economic judgements about other societies are often made without the necessary local knowledge. A good example of this is Hagen's discussion of the problems of introducing modern technology into developing countries. To illustrate a perfectly valid point that certain cultural elements cannot be assimilated in isolation, he gives the following example:

> In Burma and India, and no doubt elsewhere in South East Asia and probably in most of Africa, the digging spade is unknown. Digging is done with a broad-bladed hoe. Though it is done with dexterity, it remains an awkward process in many circumstances. Surely, it would seem, the simple substitution of the spade would greatly increase productivity. But an ordinary digging spade cannot be used with sandals or bare feet, and it turns out that if the spade is constructed with a broad strip across the top, upon which the bare feet can press, then dirt sticks to this strip and the spade will not release its load . . . Barring some further act of creativity, even so simple a tool as a spade cannot be imported into a low-income country with full efficiency until the level of living has risen sufficiently that it includes the wearing of shoes.[7]

Leaving aside the excessive generality of the statement, there is a fundamental anthropological principle that Hagen has ignored here. It is the principle that the function of a tool can only be judged by reference to its context. The hoe can be a more efficient tool than a spade. Its manipulative potential is much greater. It can be used to dig a hole and, at the same time, scrape the side with much greater ease. It is efficient for digging as well as trimming. It is suitable for the delicate construction involved in cultivating rice. It can dig much faster

than a spade. In terrace cultivation along mountain slopes, which involves scraping the descending banks of a terrace downwards, the hoe and not the spade is the efficient tool.

Such instances of misguided judgements may be multiplied. But the worrying aspect is that the uncritical acceptance of such opinions as Hagen's by the decision-makers of developing countries may have unfortunate consequences, including an undervaluation or dismissal of the traditional skills possessed by peasants and craftsmen in these countries.

Inappropriate methodology, duplicating techniques applied to economic analysis in the developed world, is often used in underdeveloped countries. One of the notable breakthroughs in economic analysis during the past few decades has been the use of quantitative techniques in model building. For example, the development of Harrod-Domar growth models in the 1950s led to the widespread application of the capital-output ratio criterion in planning economic development. A bias in favour of industrialisation and the corresponding neglect of the agricultural sector, which was an unfortunate feature of the early Indian five-year plans, may in part be due to the highly mechanistic view of growth which the acceptance of the criterion implied. It is a case of a social science mimicking the methodology of natural sciences. While the mechanistic view of economic development has been to some extent modified by the earlier failures, an uncritical faith in quantitative techniques still remains, bolstered by the growing use of econometric techniques in empirical studies in development economics.* While such techniques have their value, their use in circumstances where statistical data are incomplete or inaccurate, where there is significant cultural heterogeneity, difficulty in quantifying complex social phenomena and/or rapid structural change, needs to be carefully scrutinised.

There may also be neglect of the cultural assumptions 'hidden' in the use of certain statistical modelling techniques. To illustrate, one of the authors, while working in Tanzania, was asked to supervise a research project which involved an econometric study of fertility in Tanzania based on a theoretical model developed for the United States. The model views fertility decisions as involving essentially rational decisions about time and resource allocation made by a couple living within a conjugal framework. So that whether the couple decides to have a child next year or not depends, among other things,

*Morgenstern has argued that viewing the economy as a mechanical analogue is consistent with the widespread tendency for economists to think first of the mathematical tools available and only then of the problems to which they could apply.[8] The 'adoption' of catastrophe theory and now the mathematics of chaos in economic modelling are recent illustrations of this tendency.

on a delicate balance between the 'disutility' incurred by the wife not going out to work and the utility gained by having a child. In terms of resource allocation, the child is essentially seen as a consumer durable good – so having a child means doing without a second car. The utter inappropriateness of such a model in the Tanzanian case needs no further comment.

A final example of inappropriate universalism is the frequent neglect in economics of the social and cultural dimensions of time. Time is a vital concept in economic analysis. Whether one is examining the effect of a tax on consumer demand or the impact of a price increase on the quantity supplied of a commodity or of a change in interest rates on consumer spending, the analysis distinguishes between the short- and long-term effects of the economic agent concerned. The implicit assumption is that the time effects are universal and free of cultural constraints. But this ignores the fact that time itself is a social construct. Each culture works out a concept of time acceptable to the vast majority of its people as a regulator of their day-to-day activities. Even allowing for noticeable variations by class, age or origins in the perception of time within the same culture, there is a uniformity in the concept which can only explained by the inculcation into all members of the society from infancy of the following features of 'time'.

There is the way in which activities are arranged in relating to one another which constitutes the timing of these activities. There is the manner in which individuals or groups space and synchronise their activities which relates to the organisation of time. There is the innate human capacity to envisage occurrences in the future and plan accordingly, which involves forecasting over time. There is the historical vision of time, which may vary from a pessimistic version of retrogression from a lost golden age to a middling version of cyclical peaks and troughs of human achievement to an optimistic version of a steady progress to an ultimate utopia. Finally, there is the value imputed to time, which raises questions regarding evaluation, compartmentalisation and utilisation of time – all of which are culture specific. Thus, the view that time is money reflects an attitude where the economic value of time, its scarcity and the desirability of saving it is of importance. This is different from a world view which ranks time used in contemplation or relaxation as the highest priority. It is interesting that the rigid compartmentalisation of time found in many western societies (i.e., the time allocated to work and to leisure or social intercourse are kept strictly separate) is also culture specific – and from personal experience, it is one dichotomy that is difficult to take on board by those who have different cultural assumptions.

To what extent has economics taken on board the culture specific nature of these different dimensions of time? Our impression is that the level of awareness remains at the surface. A distinction is made

between the 'natural' time of pre-industrial societies and the 'clock' time of industrial societies. Punctuality is seen as an integral part of the technological dimension of modern life. There is a degree of awareness that the historical vision of time has some influence on whether people would strive for better living standards. But the level of discourse on the organisation of time and the value imputed to time remains superficial. To dismiss the inhabitants of developing societies as uninterested in accurate time-keeping, as some development economists are prone to do, is a travesty of fact. One only has to observe the scrupulous punctuality of the Muslim all over the world, whether in attending the mosque or breaking the fast at sunset during Ramadhan. What is at issue is the value imputed to time spent in different activities. An exposure to insights from other disciplines – notably social anthropology – would be particularly beneficial in rethinking this fundamental aspect of the subject.

Eurocentrism in psychology

Universalism in psychology

The asocial character of western psychology has shown itself in two failures: (i) the failure to admit the 'social' into the process of human development and functioning and (ii) the failure to acknowledge the role of the 'social' in its own development and functioning. Challenges to this exclusion are not new and an increasing number of psychologists today see a resolution of this problem as a major task. LeVine points to this manner of marginalising the influence of society as significant in psychology's adoption of universalism.

> Many psychologists – and many psychoanalysts as well – seem to have a deep-seated metaphysical conviction that humans everywhere are the same in all respects that count, that cultural variations are mere externals or details or reflections of extreme (and easily specifiable) conditions like malnutrition or social isolation. They reject the message of cultural relativism as it applies to psychological process.[9]

Examples where a universal is assumed range from visions of 'mind' as an intellectual phenomenon to the depiction of emotional dramas such as the battle for power in toilet training. In the study of mind and intellect, such depictions have usually borne remarkable similarity to the world of the visualiser. As Crook notes, European thought has been characterised by a tendency to reify the subjective: 'Models of mind tend to be couched in terms of the most complex machinery of control known to the modellers.'[10]

For Descartes (the founder of Cartesian philosophy which forms the basis of most modern psychology), who found pipes, machinery

and clockwork fascinating, 'mind' was a kind of spectral machine, governed by rigid and deterministic (albeit non-mechanical) laws. Similarly, 'modern man', fascinated by computers, employs 'computational metaphors' to describe the structure and functions of mind. Whatever the metaphoric machine, western psychology sees mind primarily in terms of what it does, and either ignores or devalues attempts to describe how it feels. The interest of non-European traditions in, on the other hand, the experiential aspects of mind has been well documented, ranging from the cultivation of 'open awareness', of subjective experience in Buddhist approaches to meditation, to the extreme states of *samadhi* and *mokhsa* within Hindu approaches, where the object is a desire for a 'a direct experience of the fundamental unity of a human being with the infinite'.[11] Applied universally, western models of mind contain, therefore, a built-in bias in their concentration on performance and their machine metaphors.

Within modern psychology, the dominant model of the development of 'mind' has been Piaget's largely asocial theory of the development of cognitive structures, which closely parallels the development of western science. Both the child and scientific thinking develop from irrationality and bondage to subjective experience towards objectivity and logic. In the arena of moral development, a related theory was put forward by Kohlberg.[12] While for Piaget, the child is best described as a little scientist playing all alone with objects and working out for him or herself the laws of physics, Kohlberg pictures the child as a budding moral philosopher developing refinements in moral reasoning.

In not recognising the social origins of these theories and models, psychology is guilty of assuming an objectivity and a universality for its products. And in this failure lies the possibility for bias against social groups with different histories and value systems.

Cross-cultural comparisons of intellectual performance, for example, which are frequently made by psychologists, are revealing of bias in many different ways. Glick reports an amusing case of misunderstanding which illustrates the dangers of quick comparisons across cultures.[13] In a study of the skills of Kpelle subjects in classifying twenty objects, it was found that they would consistently sort the objects into functional groups such as an orange with a knife, and a hoe with a potato, instead of into more 'appropriate' categorical groups such as fruits and vegetables, tools, etc. The Kpelles' comments were illuminating: they reported that that was the way a wise man would do things. When finally asked by the exasperated researcher how a fool would do things, the sorting was rapidly done in the expected manner!

Other factors which make comparisons invalid relate to the testing situation itself: an artificial situation which is, in fact, trained for in

middle-class western homes and schooling systems. These include non-functional games which train for 'proper' methods of problem solving; independent action, speed, and mental vs physical manoeuvres, etc.[14] However, although such 'social' factors are now well recognised in psychological theory, they are far from being accepted within psychological practice.

A further source of bias obtains from the adoption of particular theoretical 'yardsticks' for cross-cultural comparison. The most widely researched of these has been Piaget's theory, which posits a universal developmental sequence which goes through invariant stages. This theory allows clear interpretations of better or worse for performances along the sequence, and allows conclusions of general lag in mental functioning based on specific failures. Many cross-cultural psychologists in recent years have recognised the particular suitability of Piagetian tasks to western technological societies, and have concluded that many of the Piagetian mental operations, and especially those in the final stage of formal reasoning, may be achieved through specific teaching and practice, rather than through the fulfilment of some universal epigenetic sequence.

However, in a major review of cross-cultural studies of Piagetian theory, Dasen and Heron raise an interesting point about this way of explaining cross-cultural differences in cognitive performance.[15] In trying to explain the poorer performance in many non-western cultures on tests of abstract imagery, abstract reasoning and scientific thinking, many authors have described these tests and the skills they tap as peculiarly western, and therefore building in a Eurocentric bias in cross-cultural comparisons. Dasen and Heron argue that, paradoxically, such authors are implicitly appealing for a revival of Levy-Bruhl's concept of 'primitive' mentality. The description of rationalism, scientific thinking, abstract conceptual or theoretical reasoning as typically western, and of magical thinking and concrete reasoning as typically non-western, they argue, is simply another form of ethnocentrism. Instead of pre-empting the search by describing it as a western skill, psychologists should ask: 'How well can they do their (own) tricks?', thus keeping open the possibility that in these yet unexplored areas of knowledge, 'formal' reasoning does occur in these cultures.

Well, *their* tricks have still not been discovered, and members of non-western cultures, continue to perform less competently at 'tests' of formal reasoning tasks than members of western cultures. But the contradiction that this poses is an unnecessary one, and is itself implicitly based upon an asocial theory of cognitive development. If one assumes, as Piagetians do for example, that there is a 'natural' sequence of development which is universal, with a 'natural' fixed end-point (the attainment of formal reasoning) and that these stages

are 'naturally' attained (not through social tutoring) and that this is the path development will take unless there is something lacking in the environment, then the interpretation that some non-western cultures may not be competent at formal reasoning may indeed be seen as ethnocentric.

But the very idea of horizontally consistent, unvarying stages in cognitive development is now being challenged, as is, by implication, the 'naturalness' of the sequence of stages in development and the supposed 'naturalness' of the endpoint of development. The argument is put forward by some modern theorists that formal reasoning is an 'artificial' skill, in as much as it has to be specifically taught.[16] And this specific teaching lies in demanding a concentration on the internal aspects of a reasoning problem, to the exclusion of the context. One might almost say, it requires a focus upon the normally meaningless, to the exclusion of the normally meaningful. If one accepts from this point of view that formal reasoning is part of a situation (involving relations between people) and not a possession of the individual, and that the idea of specific cognitive structures which develop from the concrete to the abstract is itself the product of a particular social context, then the interpretation in question by no means diminishes the competence of non-western cultures. It is only with the acceptance of asocial universal stages and asocial development that this might be seen as a form of ethnocentrism. But this is a paradox or contradiction to be resolved within western psychology itself, not by cross-cultural comparisons based upon existing asocial theories of psychological development. Without perceiving its own constructs as contextually developing ones, psychology has no alternative but to assume false universals.

Although it is harder to adopt an asocial perspective when dealing with the 'meaning' and development of social behaviour, it has, nonetheless, frequently happened at various levels. Assumptions are often made that particular inter-personal behaviours carry the same meaning in different contexts, that the same causal processes are at work in different environments and, indeed, that the theoretical concepts developed in western psychology, and of importance to western societies, are also applicable in simple cross-cultural comparisons.

Individualism in psychology

The philosophical tradition of abstract individualism is also a factor producing inappropriate generalisation in psychology. An important source of this tradition is the work of Descartes. In his search for certainty and truth in a world in which even his senses could not be trusted, Descartes arrived at his now famous conclusion that the only certainty was his own consciousness. The metaphysical implications of

this conclusion are clear:

(i) Since another person's consciousness is completely opaque to anyone else, a clear separation exists between individual and society.

(ii) A distinction between consciousness and senses implies a split between mind and body.

(iii) In the pursuit of truth and certainty, the emphasis should be on the mind rather than the body, on the individual rather than on groupings of individuals or on relations between individuals.

This multiple dualism and its consequent biases have deeply permeated western psychology. Its effects have been reflected in the theoretical constructs developed and isolated as significant, in the values attached to particular human attributes, actions and developmental outcomes, and in the clear locating of psychological resources within the individual as opposed to within relationships.[17]

If one wishes to measure emotional strength, for instance, one measures it in the individual's ability to withstand various problems; if one wishes to measure morality,one measures it in the individual's ability to withstand temptation, make moral judgements, or behave in a 'moral' manner. One does not look at the behaviour of a group – unless to treat the group as an individual. Indeed, so entrenched are we in this perspective that the alternative suggestion, that psychological resources may be located in relationships and between people rather than within individuals, is extremely difficult to conceptualise or implement. And yet, it is precisely this choice of locating resources that causes a serious misfit between the constructs of societies where the individual does need to be very much an isolated individual, and societies which emphasise the collective nature of individuals within groups.

One interesting example of such a misfit can be seen in the area of morality. All theories in western psychology focus on the individual as the agent of moral actions, as the possessor and/or constructor of moral rules and principles, and as the actor whose decisions are untouched by the presence of external watchmen – i.e., the individual who makes moral decisions on the strength of conviction, not on the strength of support. This definition of morality as an individual resource is, in fact, compatible with the needs and the 'folk' psychology of most western cultures today. But this is precisely where the incompatibility with non-individualist cultures arises.

The dominant theory of moral development today defines morality primarily as justice.[18] And justice implies a further objective prerequisite: impartiality. That is, the application of the individual's rules and principles to all other individuals, free of particular relationships. There is a growing rebellion within western psychology today, especially by feminists who argue that many psychological constructs are masculine in their orientation and their bias. In the area of

morality, the very definition of morality as justice precludes what Gilligan calls an 'alternative moral voice' – that of caring.[19] The latter allows interpersonal acts of empathy and love to be described as moral in addition to acts of moral reason and impartial justice. As Blum puts it, it allows the particular as well as the impartial to possess moral quality.[20]

Studies of morality in India have had the unenviable task of trying to 'explain away' uncomfortable behaviour. Individuals in India appear to act guided by external gratification rather than internal norms alone. The psychoanalytic literature describes this as a failure in the development of internal controls, somewhat akin to the weaker superegos attributed to women generally, and a consequent development of a 'communal conscience' instead of individual conscience. Kakar describes succinctly the Indian's private touchstone for moral codes:

> Thus, although Indians publicly express a staunch commitment to traditional moral codes, privately, in relation to himself, an individual tends to consider the violation of these codes reprehensible only when it displeases or saddens those elders who are the intimate, personal representatives of his communal conscience.[21]

The embarrassment for such an Indian lies in having to defend him or herself against the image of being an adult human being who yet does not possess moral norms entirely his or her own, or is unable to pledge and live up to context-free allegiance to any norms.

The embarrassment, however, is unnecessary. The dichotomy between individuals and their interpersonal relationships, which western psychology has for so long accepted, is the product of a particular tradition which is being challenged even within the discipline. Rather than accept definitions of deficiencies imposed from without, psychologists from cultures of a more collectivist persuasion need to define their own conceptions of morality and maturity and to recognise the extent to which western developmental psychology has focused on the growth of individual resources in the child or the adult, rather than on interpersonal or social resources. In the development of morality, the early demarcation of rules and principles allows the individual to acquire them. Their absence handicaps individual growth in individualist societies. In non-individualist cultures, morality might, on the other hand, be developed as an interpersonal resource, tied to particular interpersonal contexts, and exist as responsiveness as well as justice. The value of morality which exists within an individual as opposed to within a situation or within the context of a relationship must depend on the function it serves on the ground, rather than whether it meets the criteria of a theory of morality.

Within western psychology, too, the attempt to reject individualist assumptions of human functioning and development and replace them with more contextual explanations is progressing rapidly.[22] Whether psychology can ever achieve complete harmony between its search for generalisations and its growing recognition of the context dependence of itself as well as of its subject matter – only time will tell.

Eurocentrism in social anthropology

The imperial legacy

There is considerable literature documenting the complex and contradictory nature of anthropology's involvement with imperialism.[23] The anthropologist depended on the colonial power for permission as well as, often, material support. The structure of power relationships affected the choice and treatment of topics. As Asad put it, 'There is a strange reluctance on the part of most professional anthropologists to consider seriously the power structure within which their discipline has taken shape.'[24] The general drift of anthropology subsequently has not challenged this structure.

Theories of cultural and social diffusion and evolution, the prevailing approaches of nineteenth-century anthropology, were consonant with an expanding and aggressive colonialism. Later, on the dominant 'structural-functional' paradigm, with its notion that all the parts of a social system work together to produce an equilibrium, reinforced the illusion that colonised societies were self-determining, even static and stagnant. Such a model was in harmony with the later colonial concern to consolidate possessions as, paradoxically, was the notion of cultural relativism. The anthropologist became important to the administration with the retreat from direct coercive rule.

It is possible that some of the critiques of 'classical anthropology' have attributed more influence to the discipline than was warranted. Earlier imperial societies managed quite well without anthropology to 'support' their activities, though no doubt they, too, developed 'anthropologies' in the informal sense, sets of collective representations of people in society, of foreigners in relation to themselves.*

Said has reminded us that various intellectual and emotional as well as political roots lay under post-Renaissance Europe's interest in other societies, particularly in those that became known as the

*Such stereotypes change over time. In 1068, Said ibn Ahamad classified the nations known at that time into three categories of people: (i) the literate and scientifically advanced consisting of Indians, Persians, Greeks, 'Rums' (i.e., Byzantines and Eastern Christians), Arabs and Jews; (ii) 'the noblest of the unlearned nations who are worthy of respect for their achievements in other fields' consisting of Turks and Chinese (their technology was specially mentioned); and (iii) the rest mainly consisting of 'Northern and Southern Barbarians of Frankish Europe'.

Orient.[25] Growing secularism and the loss of belief in the sacredness of the world, coupled with a distaste for industrial society, led to romantic notions of the 'other', an extreme form of which was the notion of the spontaneous 'Noble Savage'. Such ideas survive among many people including radicals, both black and white. They express a yearning for an imagined, more integrated and satisfying life. Romanticism became a new religion and forms of it have often been used as a yardstick by which to criticise European society. Said argues that despite its apparent contrast with other European attitudes to the Orient, romanticism shared the same assumptions of different human essences and irresolvable contrasts. In this sense it was what Inden has called the 'loyal opposition'.[26] The romantic approach was and is Eurocentric in that it uses or creates images of other peoples in terms of the cognitive needs and interests of Europeans.

It would, in any case, be surprising if social anthropology were not in any sense Eurocentric, since it was in Europe that anthropology became an organised discipline.* Even today, most anthropologists come from the West, where most of the subject's audience is concentrated. Europeans cannot be expected to transcend their origins any more than any other people.

Focussing on difference

Whatever its failings in the past and present, social anthropology has been the West's most sustained attempt to understand other societies and cultures. In that sense, it is, at its best and in its ideal form, the least ethnocentric of the social sciences.

Social anthropology also differs from the other social sciences in that it has been less concerned with general processes and, therefore, less inclined to search for universal laws. This has been both its strength and its weakness. It means that it has not lost sight of the particularity of experience. On the other hand, the stress on the particular has tended to highlight the differences between peoples. This might be justified on the grounds that every traveller tends to notice what is different. He or she attempts to make sense of 'otherness' by accommodating it within a familiar or 'normal' framework of mental structures and hierarchies, thus controlling any disturbing effects. The alternative, which involves redefining the self, is more challenging. Anthropology has been an attempt to do the former, to 'make normal' the 'other'. The discipline has often even been defined in terms of the study of the 'other', i.e., of societies different from one's own. Those who have been unable to render the

*Although anthropology eventually became an enlightened source of information on society and culture, during the early nineteenth century it was a system for the hierarchical classification of races.

'other' harmless, who have 'gone native' (i.e., succumbed to the demands or pleasures of the 'other'), have usually abandoned the discipline or been unable or unwilling to complete their theses or books. So central is the focus on 'otherness' that anthropologists actively seek out those who are most different – elderly or uneducated villagers, for example, rather than the educated urban middle class. This is part of the endeavour to maintain as differentiated an image of the 'other' as possible. It is likely, moreover, that papers are rewritten to stress the elements that most differ from 'European' patterns. Studies that do not highlight differences tend in practice to be seen as more towards the sociology end of the sociology/anthropology continuum. In the study of India, for example, such topics as agricultural change, health practices, trade unions and gender have often been seen as of less anthropological interest than studies of caste or ritual, unless difference in values is stressed.

The tendency to focus on difference may, unwittingly, give the impression that different groups have different needs and expectations. As such, it is not incompatible with notions of the need for special treatment or even of European superiority and dominance. Most anthropologists make some attempt to imply that differences are an expression of universal processes, but studies vary greatly in the degree to which this is explicit. A recent revival of interest in symbolic systems of meaning in ritual and myth, rather than in social structures, often serves, in effect, again to emphasise the difference between peoples, despite the universalising claims made in this field by Levi-Strauss. Criticism of Eurocentrism in anthropology has surfaced again among the black minorities in Europe. Most anthropologists refuse to engage seriously with these criticisms. Several important issues are highlighted here. The first is that the usual mode of discourse fraudulently implies an impossibly neutral and transcendental knowledge on the part of the researcher, as when the anthropologist speaks for the 'other' without adding the voices of 'insiders' (difficult though it sometimes is to establish who is an 'insider' and who is not). Modification in presentation – laying a wide range of views on the table or using the first person – might meet some of this criticism. But it is hard to envisage a radical alternative that does not imply some form of relativism and hence, perhaps, from a Judaeo-Christian point of view, the spectre of cynicism and inaction, or, in the terms of classical anthropology, a loss of 'collective representation'.

While writers such as Barthes and Derrida have attempted to bring this loss of 'collective representation' to our consciousness, they have not examined the existential problem raised.[27] Such issues have been discussed for over 1,600 years in the classical schools of Indian philosophy. The issues of relativism emerged early in such a heterogeneous society as India.

The particularism of social anthropology has produced its own variant of the problem of the fraudulently authoritative, even 'masculine' voice.[28] If the subject is defined as the 'particularistic' study of 'others', it becomes unnecessary to incorporate the self into the analysis or recognise how the ethnography itself is socially grounded. However, it is unlikely that an account can be sociologically accurate, or at least adequate, if it is conceived in 'bad faith'. By this is meant deceiving oneself into thinking that other views are socially located, but one's own are not. In practice, any approach must emerge from a particular institutional or subgroup location in society, whether based on class, occupational origin, regional identity, gender or religious ancestry.

Marxism avoids some of these problems in that it does, to some extent, include European society within its analysis. However, marxist anthropology, a new and untypical strand in the discipline, can be accused of Eurocentrism on other counts. Some of its exponents go so far as to argue that the 'collective representations' of the people being studied should be ignored.[29] Marxist anthropologists can also be criticised on the grounds that they assume that certain European categories, such as 'society', 'religion', 'economy' and 'nature', are of universal application. Such criticisms have been made of anthropologists in general.[30] No one has yet been able to offer an alternative conceptual vocabulary that satisfactorily transcends all cultures. Even at a lower and less difficult level of analysis, it is not uncommon to use Eurocentric terms such as 'extended' and 'nuclear' in describing family structure. From an Indocentric perspective, for example, it may be more appropriate to distinguish 'joint' from 'fragmented' families.

Effects versus intentions

Other issues of concern are also linked to the question of mode of presentation. These emerge out of anthropologists' reluctance to follow one of their own precepts, i.e., that the 'meaning' of a particular custom, pattern of behaviour, piece of writing or visual imagery must go beyond the intention or stated aim of the act or actor. We have to consider not simply what anthropologists say or intend in communication with one another, but how they and their work are interpreted by people outside their discipline.

The mode of presentation may serve to exclude from readership a large range of people, including a disproportionate number of non-Europeans. An abundant use of jargon or terms familiar only to those who specialise in the particular area, may be due to the nature of socialisation within the discipline. It may also indicate a concern to mark off disciplinary boundaries or to establish academic credentials and elite status. Regardless of causes or intentions, such a practice

results in excluding 'others' and is, therefore, indirectly ethnocentric. The medium speaks louder than the message.

Anthropologists are sometimes consulted by people who have a limited understanding of the subject. They may be asked for 'cultural' information. By accepting the given framework of questioning, even if it is not the one they would use in their academic writing, they allow such perceptions as the following to go unchallenged:

(i) A knowledge of cultural difference (rather than, say, economic inequality or political relationships) is all that is needed.

(ii) The art and literature of some societies is akin to folk lore. It was only recently that an advertisement appeared in British newspapers for a university lecturer in 'non-western art' with the proviso that applications were especially welcome from anthropologists. Would a similar specification have been made if there was a vacancy for a lecturership in 'western art'?

These problems appear most starkly in the popularised anthropology of films and exhibitions, which are addressed to a larger and unknown audience whose interest in such exhibits has never been seriously examined . Anthropologists often lack not only the skills of communication with such audiences but also the desire to acquire them. It is interesting to speculate on why anthropologists are more interested in the common people of other societies than of their own. Unawareness of their role and lack of participant observation of the consumers of such works has meant that anthropologists often do not include sufficient comparative or contextual material. The matri-focal or single parent family may appear as a 'problem' if presented in an ethnographic rather than comparative framework which includes details about, say, white lower working-class family patterns. There may be no information relating to the political situation or to the effects of international trade relations and tourism, for example. Or the material may be accurate at one level but misleading at another. It is inadequate to present witchcraft among the Azande without including discussion of such topics as McCarthyism in the USA and the Nazi persecution of Jews. The presentation often ignores the fact that many viewers are racially and culturally prejudiced. Exhibitions may be viewed in giggling wonder by schoolchildren who point from displays to children of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin in their group. Racial minorities know only too well the way in which popular anthropology is often 'received' by the general public. And it is this that, in part, explains their hostility to anthropology. Anthropologists often forget that all 'knowledge' is in practice received and assimilated as though it is general. If the anthropologist does not provide the generalisation in his or her material, the readers or viewers will create their own by making use of their pre-existing stereotypes and prejudices.

Drawing the strands together

In our examination of the foundations of Eurocentrism in the social sciences, the key concepts that have repeatedly emerged have been inappropriate universalism and individualism in the case of economics and psychology and excessive particularism in the case of social anthropology. A common malaise affecting all three subjects has been the persistence of a form of 'discipline-centrism' which has contributed to their Eurocentrism. On the question of human universals, we found economics to be least aware of the implicit biases in its assumptions of human nature and society. Discipline-centrism in economics provides a convenient escape route from thorny issues of culture, power, human nature and values. Similarly, psychology for a long time failed to recognise the relevance of culture as anything but an external process. By its insistence on being concerned with 'purely' psychological subject matter, it has persistently distanced itself from the social and historical. It is only social anthropology, with its focus on the particular that has the potential for making unbiased cross-cultural comparisons. However, in its anxiety to make out a distinct subject area for itself, it has tended to stress the particularity and differences of cultures. In effect, it has functioned to support Eurocentrism.

What is the solution? Is it a question of degree? Is it that we should follow the middle path on a continuum of emphases between particularism and universalism? This answer is too vague and uninformative to be helpful. Alternatively, is the answer that psychology and economics should change fundamentally in such a direction that the particular and 'cultural' are integral rather than peripheral to their explanations? What, then, of social anthropology? The answer must be, of course, that if the other social sciences become genuinely 'social', there may be no need for a social anthropology separate from sociology! We would then have one psychology and one economics rather than several, i.e., approach a kind of universalism which could be valuable.

It is to the effects of persistent Eurocentrism, briefly itemised in the introduction to this paper, that we next turn.

(i) *It has damaged non-European societies through the 'colonisation' of their intellectuals.*

The question that immediately arises is what precisely is being 'colonised'. It is clearly not any recognisable non-European social science discipline which has been taken over and then modified beyond all recognition. The institutionalisation of separate disciplines is a characteristic of western academic development. Not to question the idea of drawing disciplinary boundaries is, perhaps to make false

assumptions about their pre-existent form. Nor is it meaningful to talk about 'colonisation' if an indigenous tradition did not exist in the first place. Could we talk, for example, about Chad psychology being 'colonised' if such an entity did not already exist? All one can claim is that something has been replaced or overrun as a result of the imposition of ideas and values emanating from outside. And the persistence of a virtual western monopoly in the creation of new institutions and networks to legitimise research and publication helps to perpetuate this form of intellectual dependence. But the question remains: have non-European societies been damaged more than enriched by the adoption of such 'knowledge' from European sources?

This raises a number of other questions: What exactly is the nature of damage inflicted by Eurocentric scholarship? If the argument is that the damage has prevented the older indigenous traditions from developing and being used, then the question arises: is it legitimate to compare cultures (or even countries) to individual organisms as capable of evolving to their full potential if allowed to do so? Such a comparison soon breaks down, since cultures are not spatially and temporally bounded in the same way as animate organisms. If we try to do so, we are guilty of the same narrowness we are accusing European social sciences of adopting.

We are, therefore, left with a particular concept of 'colonisation' which emerges from an undetected mismatch between the perspectives (or, even more obviously, the goals) of the imported theoretical framework from the West being used to analyse the reality of people's lives and values elsewhere. Examples of such mismatches have already appeared in our discussions of psychology and economics, although not so much in social anthropology.

It may be argued that the adoption of imported perspectives and goals leads to a creative tension, one of whose benefits is the very recognition of multiple perspectives which this article is arguing for. But in the historical context of recent colonialism, such adoption has usually meant the undervaluing of the experiences of the colonised and the undermining of their confidence in their actions and perceptions. The 'colonised' people (for want of a better term) frequently have to adopt the position of second-hand receivers of knowledge when dealing with theories derived from alien experiences.

Writers and social scientists from underdeveloped countries are often very clearly aware of their position as 'borrowers' of colonial theories. The lack of indigenous theories is frequently lamented.[31] The question of what indigenous social sciences should look like and, therefore, the search for national identities is a very familiar refrain in recent Asian and African writing. There are as yet no strong alternative conceptual frameworks. A rejection of their position as

intellectual colonies of Europe is perhaps a necessary prelude to building new approaches. One direction which the search for a truly indigenous identity often takes is a return to ancient scriptures and cultural roots (see, for example, the recent three volume tome on *Indian Psychology* by Sinha).[32] Whether such directions prove fruitful, or turn out to be yet other forms of borrowing – i.e., from the past – remains to be seen.

(ii) *Eurocentrism has impoverished the European academic disciplines themselves which remain unaware of alternative sources of knowledge.* The point is more general than the neglect of certain historical sources of knowledge discussed earlier. Where only single perspectives are available, evaluation cannot be anything but limited. A good illustration in psychology, discussed earlier, relates to the European focus on mind as performance to the virtual exclusion of mind as experience. This can actually be seen to have limited all understanding of the nature of consciousness. That is, there has been a loss in terms of content and information which can only remedied by taking mystical experiences more seriously!

Another perspective which the limited vision of Eurocentrism has stunted in both economics and psychology relates to the recognition of non-individualist societies. Even before Descartes, there were two opposing views in Europe of the nature of an individual: the 'human' view versus the 'personality' view. The former, the collectivist vision, saw the individual in terms of a larger network of interpersonal relations, while the latter, stressing isolable mind, came to be the western ideal of individualism. European analysis of psychological and economic behaviour is part of the particular individualist tradition emphasised by Descartes. We have examined the failures in both disciplines resulting from their asocial character.

The perspective of the social anthropologist is limiting in a totally different way from that of an economist or a psychologist. The 'holistic self-containment', implied in studying different groups of human beings, gives the impression that they have different needs and expectations. And because of the common perception that anthropologists actively seek out and, indeed, only study 'exotic' groups from remote parts of the world rather than groups in their own society (which is often left to the sociologist), there is an implicit assumption that the conclusions drawn have little general relevance. Indeed, the concerns of the anthropologist may be seen as highlighting different human essences and irresolvable contrasts.

(iii) *Eurocentrism functions, regardless of intention, to legitimate international systems of inequality.*
Examples abound in economics of support for the status quo. The

economic ideology sustaining the production hierarchies during the colonial era and, subsequently, the globalisation of production and the new international division of production have had no difficulty recruiting scholars to provide the gloss. These developments have been well explored in the works of Harris, Mitter, Rodney and Sivanandan, among others.[33] The contribution of social anthropology to the legitimisation of international systems of inequality is of a more indirect kind. It lies in the perception that a knowledge of cultural differences is possible or valuable without any necessary consideration of questions relating to economic inequality or political power relationships.

However, the more damaging inequality promoted by Eurocentric social science disciplines probably arises from the borrowing of categories and constructs meaningful and valued in western contexts, and transposing them in other contexts where they are less meaningful and less valued. The emerging 'poorer' performance of individuals from the 'other' contexts serves to lend a cloak of scientific objectivity and respectability to the view that underdevelopment is not merely an economic problem but a human and social one as well.

Within psychology, the 'poorer' performance of non-European societies ranges from lower scores on intelligence tests, to lower scores on measures of independence and initiative, to less success on measures of compliance and strategies of control. In standard intelligence testing, the development of local norms serves as a convenient gloss over the basic fact that one population is performing less well than others. Local norms should aid the tester in practical applications of the test. But in no way do they solve the problem of the test's fundamental foreignness and inapplicability. Until both western psychology and non-western psychologists confront the theoretical implications of this problem, there can be no real end to subtle academic colonialism.

There is today one desire that transcends all national boundaries. Every society, irrespective of its cultural assumptions and values, is in search of affluence through economic growth. There is also a universal subscription to the Baconian idea that, through science and technology, growth and affluence are attainable. But in recent years, there has emerged an issue of global significance – a multi-dimensional ecological crisis which is basically a product of three major technological innovations, namely the motor car, nuclear weapons and petrochemical products. Together, they are not only responsible for the depletion of exhaustible resources but also adversely affect the self-renewing capacity of the rest. While these issues are in the forefront of the political agenda in the developed world, in many underdeveloped countries today, the 'Green' concern is viewed with suspicion, as yet another attempt to deprive them of their share of

global resources. The social scientists of these countries, along with their politicians, will have to start thinking about how the growing ecological crisis will affect them, rather then leaving it to others.* Tackling such a challenge may stimulate a more sustained attack on Eurocentrism in the social sciences.

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FATIMA MEER

Negotiated settlement: pros and cons

Does a climate for negotiation exist?

Do we want to negotiate? Do the Nationalists want to negotiate? Does a climate for negotiation exist? Walter Sisulu answered this question on our behalf at the recent historic African National Congress (ANC) rally in Soweto. He said that the ANC has always been ready to negotiate, that it called on Dr Malan to negotiate in 1952, that in 1958 Chief Albert Luthuli called on Prime Minister Strydom to negotiate, and in 1961 Nelson Mandela urged Prime Minister Verwoerd to call a national convention to institute a new constitution.

The post-1976 township carnage would not have occurred had the government conceded to demands for better education, lowered transport and rent charges and higher wages: and, of course, Umkhonto, the ANC army, would not have been born had the call for a national convention been heeded in 1961.

A number of surveys conducted among the disenfranchised between 1985 and 1986 have emphasised the priority placed on negotiation as the means to constitutional change in South Africa. In a 1985 national survey of 800 African respondents,[1] 90 per cent supported negotiations between the government and true leaders to bring about change. Sixty per cent also supported protest action over rent and unequal education, and strikes and boycotts. Support for the one does not exclude support for the other, which validates the ANC call to

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Race & Class, 31(4), (1990)

enter into negotiations but at the same time to maintain the heat on the government to ensure that it negotiates, since the reluctant party is the government, not the ANC.

In a 1983 survey conducted by Professor Lawrence Schlemmer, 85 per cent of the African respondents saw a leader as one who was critical of the government, but who would cooperate when beneficial. Only 11 per cent saw a leader as one who would never cooperate with the government.[2] A survey carried out in the Durban region at the height of the 1976 Soweto uprising found that only 11 per cent supported violence as a means to coerce change. [3]

Yet there are radical groups who distrust negotiation, and dismiss it as collaboration. The New Unity Movement (NUM) states: 'The idea that the fundamental rights of the masses can, in the present circumstances, be gained and protected by negotiations of any kind with the rulers, is a disgraceful political hoax.'[4] It advocates the continuation of the policy of non-collaboration which, it points out, is fifty years old and dismisses negotiations as 'a ploy to nip in the bud the development of the struggle in South Africa onto a high plateau'. This position belies the will of the disenfranchised as demonstrated in the surveys; it also belies the fact that every colony has gained independence finally through negotiation. Negotiation is the final step in the long and protracted struggle for self-determination. Hundreds of thousands were killed in the Indian liberatory struggle, 13,000 in the Kenyan, at least 15,000 in the Zimbabwean and casualties in the Namibian war have been estimated at 1,000 per annum. In none of these instances was the oppressor conquered through the military might of the oppressed. They won through wearing out the oppressor's patience, demoralising his right to govern and so deteriorating political and economic conditions that it no longer remained worth his while to hold on to power. Portugal was spending half her national budget and deploying 150,000 troops to maintain power in Mozambique and Guinea (Bissau);[5] South Africa admitted to 25,000 troops in Namibia, though United Nations sources put the figure at over 40,000, against SWAPO's 9,000 men.[6]

The ANC's guerrilla warfare, international diplomacy and waves of internal unrest and state repression have collectively undermined the country's economy and are today forcing the Nationalists to negotiate. Sisulu correctly observes: 'The apartheid regime is facing a deep and irreversible crisis, all its political strategies of reforming apartheid have failed dismally.'[7] The same prognosis comes from US Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen, who states:

> For the first time in years, it is possible to be somewhat hopeful that a negotiation scenario may be just beyond the horizon. The great pressures, internal and external, on South African Whites to accept

> change are growing and are helping convince the South African government that it must move beyond its current position and accept fundamental change: sanctions have played a role in stimulating new thinking within the White power structure. It is now increasingly clear to that government that the well-being of the White minority cannot be sustained without a negotiated political settlement that results in political equality for all South Africans.'[8]

For the disenfranchised, the alternative to negotiation is civil disobedience and/or guerrilla warfare, neither of which has the capacity in itself to overpower the state.

The military alternative

The military strength of the anti-apartheid forces is assessed variously to be between 5,000 and 10,000 trained guerrillas.* The South African Defence Force has an estimated total strength of 103,500, plus 67,900 conscripts[9] distributed over its army, navy and airforce. The ANC army is restricted to trained insurgents who penetrate the country on foot and work in secrecy. Over the years, the number of assaults on 'traitors' and 'collaborators' has been increasing, so that while there were seventeen attacks on councillors and their property up to 1984, the figure rose to 123 between 1985 and 1988.[10]

Recruits are easily available, our youth, like youth all over, are eager to go into training and to return to liberate the country. The effective combat careers of twenty Umkhonto soldiers brought before the South African law courts averaged less than a year after two years of training, suggesting a high 'fatality' rate.

Russia, Cuba, China and, very recently, Libya are the main supporters of South African military resistance, with Russia being the main supporter of arms and training. Russia's continuing support is imperative to the armed struggle. The Soviets are coming to terms with capitalism and abandoning the 'no win' cold war which has consumed the major part of their national energy at the expense of improving the quality of life of citizens. Recent uprisings in China and Eastern Europe have made their points. The Soviets have been party to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and indications are that they do not wish to be involved in military escalations in South Africa. With the independence of Namibia, the war between the ANC and the Nationalist government alone remains to be resolved and the international mood is that that 'war' should be settled through negotiation. Thus, it seems that there would be dwindling support for any further protraction in South Africa's guerrilla warfare.

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*The US State Department puts it at 5,000; the London-based Institute for Strategic Studies at 10,000.

Mass civil disobedience

Up to 1960, resistance against apartheid was organised through disciplined non-violent campaigns. In 1976, a body of our youth moved into the front rank of extra-parliamentary opposition and has remained there ever since. The modus operandi has been consumer, transport and school boycotts and the calling of National stay-aways. These have resulted in wide-scale disruptions in the townships. The offensives, however, have been largely uncoordinated, sporadic, undisciplined and poorly planned, due mainly to the need for secrecy and the consequent lack of consultation with those whose cooperation was sought.

The adult generation has remained, by and large, dubious of this 'revolution'; it has serious misgivings about the belligerency of the youth and is more conscious of the state of chaos in which the townships have been plunged than in the political benefits of ungovernability. In the absence of any understanding of the political process, political action can only be apparently political, and is, in effect, aimless, the aim being lost in the euphoria of action, protest becoming an end in itself, a way of life. Our monumental problem is that we remain divided between generations, the adult largely intimidated by the youth.

Soviet analysts have expressed deep doubts about the revolutionary content of township boycotts, see the 'young comrades' as lacking in understanding of socialism, and doubt that the ANC and Communist Party can control them.

> The process of shaping a revolutionary situation which we now witness in South Africa is far from being completed. Protest demonstrations are largely confined to African townships. The broad masses often stay aloof. The main participants are students and the unemployed. The working class has not yet thrown the full measure of its enormous revolutionary potential into the struggle.[11]

State reaction to the boycott campaigns has, on the other hand, been excessive. There were 45,000 detentions during 1984-8 and during that time 4,012 people were killed in political violence. While over 90 per cent of the casualties were Black and 83.3 per cent township residents, the majority of the killings, 52 per cent were of Black by Black – 31 per cent of the killings were attributed to the police. Whatever the nature of state manipulations, in the final analysis we must bear the responsibility for our internal fissurings and acknowledge it as an indication of our weakness that we allowed ourselves to be violently divided among ourselves.

But, for all their shortcomings, the boycott campaigns of the 1980s had a global effect. South Africa's trading partners lost their

confidence in the Nationalist state, major banks called in their loans and refused to make further loans, and the very forces that had resisted the calls for sanctions began applying them because their pockets were threatened. Lower and middle range South African Whites and not Black workers became the targets of sanctions as the sanctions lobby had always predicted – as interest rates rose, for example, payment on mortgages become threatened.

There is no doubt at all that the Nationalists' capacity for negotiation is sanction-linked. White South Africans have not undergone a psychic change. They feel the same way about Blacks as they always have. The difference is that whereas they believed in the past that they could repress them interminably, they do not do so now.

We first awoke to the prospects of a negotiated settlement in July last year when the then Nationalist state president met Nelson Mandela. There was some consternation at the time and murmurings that ' a prisoner cannot negotiate'; the murmurers, taken by surprise, overlooked the crucial fact that the 'prisoner' was the leader of the people and a prisoner only by official definition.

Negotiations go on all the time between capital and labour. This is the essence of the Industrial Conciliation Boards, and the right to trade unions is, in fact, a right to negotiation, to bring the boss to account in the event of unfair labour practice.

The fact that disinvesting firms, like Coca Cola and Ford, and South African firms, like Anglo-American and De Beers, offer shares to their workers (even if one interprets these shares as bribes or attempts at cooptation) is a recognition of the value and power of workers and capital's need for labour's goodwill.

Trade and Sanctions

Up to now, the South African government has held the disenfranchised Black people of the country hostage against their own freedom, and the West has supported it through arms and capital to do so. It is precisely because of the link between western capital and apartheid oppression that we have called for sanctions. We know that capital creates jobs, but we also know that it creates profits, and our oppression is linked to those profits. If the profits dry up, racial oppression also begins to dry up, and despite the fulminations of industrialists and Thatcherites, the South African government is being driven to the talking table because of the threat of sanctions from its crucial trading partners.

There are hard arguments that sanctions will not have much effect on South Africa, that while exports and imports constitute 60 per cent of the country's GNP, 55 per cent of the exports are very low bulk precious metals and stones which are easily smuggled. Any stand

taken on sanctions by interest groups outside South Africa is closely related to existing trade relations. If a country has none, it can afford to be moralistic. Britain, France, the USA, Japan and Germany are South Africa's top ranking trading partners. They have been the most resistant to sanctions. At the same time, because of their trade relations, they have the greatest influence in pressing the Nationalist government to negotiate with the disenfranchised and establish a non-racial democracy.

International firms doing business in South Africa are also threatened with boycotts in their own countries as the outrage against apartheid mounts. In the US, by 1987, twenty-three states and 175 cities[12] had applied some sort of sanctions against South Africa and this, in turn, pressurised their congressmen and senators to take steps at central government level. In 1986, the American Congress replaced Reagan's Constructive Engagement Policy with the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which committed the administration 'to effective enforcement of existing sanctions', and 'to maintain a level of official representation' to influence 'progress towards ending apartheid and establishing a non-racial democracy'.

Shares of South African trade, 1984

	Exports (%)	*Imports (%)*
United States	8.4	15.9
Japan	7.7	12.9
Switzerland	6.8	–
Britain	4.3	11.1
Federal Republic of Germany	3.9	15.7
Italy	2.5	3.5
Holland	2.4	–
France	2.2	3.8
Special categories (mainly gold for exports, oil and armaments for imports)	46.6	14.7

Source: International Monetary Fund, based on government statistics

Do nationalists want to negotiate?

The last election was fought on the issue of dismantling apartheid. Within Afrikaner politics, it positioned the Nationalists towards the 'Left' and earned them an ultra-Right opposition, dedicated to

reviving failed Verwoerdism. There were White fears of a hung parliament, but the Nationalists returned with a clear majority and President de Klerk claimed that he had a mandate from the overwhelming majority of White South Africans to dismantle apartheid. On the opening of parliament in early February, he unbanned the ANC, the Pan African Congress and the South African Communist Party, and committed his party to a non-racial democracy. 'The aim is a totally new and just constitutional dispensation in which every inhabitant enjoys equal rights, treatment and opportunity in every sphere of endeavour – constitutional, social and economic.'

The ANC's own constitutional guideline is no different in this respect: 'The constitution must give full protection to the fundamental human rights of all citizens . . . ' Both parties are sensitive to minority rights: the ANC protects 'equal, cultural, linguistic and religious rights for all'; de Klerk protects the 'human rights of all our citizens as well as collective units, associations, minorities and nations'. The inclusion of 'nations' creates problems and suggests that the Nationalists are still hoping to preserve group rights. However, the release of Mandela within weeks of that historic speech makes a negotiated settlement almost a certainty. The danger signals against a possible collapse of negotiations and a reversal to the apartheid mode actually come at this stage from South Africa's trading partners, who want to swing back into their 'normal' trade relations in the country even before negotiations begin and some positive moves towards a raceless society have emerged. Their greatest concern, apart from their own trade interests, appears to be rewarding de Klerk; that, they claim, would strengthen de Klerk's position among Whites.

Thus, two weeks after the election and even before the release of Sisulu and associates and the first ANC rally (December 1989), the US Assistant Secretary of State, while admitting to the Senate foreign relations sub-committee that none of the American-identified preconditions (the release of political prisoners and return of political exiles, lifting of the State of Emergency and unbanning of all political organisations) had been met, that no movement towards dialogue was assured and, in fact, detention of political activists had increased, nonetheless advised that no further sanctions be applied against the Nationalists.[13] The Bush Administration's report repeated that 'sanctions are counter-productive', the counter-production this time being spelled out as the 'sanctions-related hardships that have mostly hurt the White poor and middle classes through ever increasing taxes, rising inflation and high interest rates'.[14] The inference was that de Klerk should be helped to show some gains to the conservative minority. By the end of November, both US Assistant Secretary of State Cohen and Mrs Thatcher were reported as calling for the withdrawal of some sanctions in the light of the virtual ending of the

State of Emergency and the de facto unbanning of the ANC!

The Bush report argues that South Africa's present economic growth rate of 1-2 per cent is far short of the 5 per cent needed to create jobs for an estimated '350,000 new job seekers, each year, most of whom are Black. This has led to drastically reduced expenditures on education and housing, thus exacerbating the gross structural inequalities that deny South Africa's majority the education, skills and opportunities it will need to successfully participate in post-apartheid society.'[15] The argument is blatantly misleading and all the more dangerous since it is applied at state level. The Nationalists have never used 'extra' monies to promote Black welfare and are not about to do so now. Economic empowerment of the Nationalist government can but play into the hands of the White extremists and react against enlightened Afrikanerdom. It can help neither Mandela nor de Klerk, for if the raised expectations of the Black masses are in any way dashed now, the Black backlash will be of such an extent that it will take generations before South Africa is made safe for investment.

The trading partners of apartheid have for years threatened us with the 'scorched earth' mentality of the Afrikaners if driven too far. But the reality is that South African Black youth are already scorching parts of the South African earth. When negotiations are linked to sanctions which are then pursued in the interests of those trading partners who have the capacity to apply them, what is left exposed in this process is a people desperate in their oppression to unleash desperate violence. Do the disenfranchised have to destroy themselves completely and utterly before the so-called liberal democrats will concede that their profit is dependent on Black survival – and that, on that account alone if no other, they should treat them with greater respect? When the Nationalists begin to see the writing on the wall, they should be helped to sharpen their vision rather than have it dimmed by premature rewards. For these may only arouse the hope that they can survive without Blacks after all, as their international White Godfathers are so ready to assist.

Guidelines and time-tables

All those interested in a negotiated settlement in South Africa, including the Nationalists, are agreed that the existing apartheid society has to be replaced with a non-racial democracy. This is the non-negotiable fundamental. The ANC has its own guidelines for the new economic and political structure. Other parties have theirs. Negotiations imply taking all representative guidelines into account, making a genuine attempt to appreciate the constraints of other parties, political, economic, cultural and psychological, and working out a solution through those constraints. Compromises are inevitable, and if we enter the negotiating chamber with the attitude that to

compromise is to sell out, then negotiations will fail before they begin.

We have to negotiate, the franchised and disenfranchised, because there is no alternative to achieving peace and prosperity through any other means.

The ANC has called for a constituent assembly on the basis of universal adult franchise. It is in the interest of the South African government to call elections for such an assembly as speedily as possible. Having already classified the disenfranchised into political constituencies through the tricameral parliament, homelands and local and regional councils, there can be few procedural problems.

We have a problem, of course, in that this government is not responsible to any body outside itself. In that context, the South African situation is unique. Liberation struggles throughout Africa and Asia were fought against foreign colonisers whose authority had remained over the country even when government was effectively in the hands of local White electorates. In the case of Namibia, the country was under the trusteeship of, firstly, the League of Nations and, secondly, the United Nations. In the case of Zimbabwe, Britain imposed sanctions when the White settler government declared its unilateral independence from the mother country.

Negotiations have also, in practically all instances, been a long process. It took Zimbabwe eight years to elect its constituent assembly after the Smith government, under pressure from Britain, agreed to move towards majority rule. Namibian independence was achieved thirty-three years after the United Nations first voted to end the South African mandate and it took ten years, even after the adoption of Resolution 435 by the United Nations, laying down the terms of withdrawal, to elect its constituent assembly. Negotiated change in South Africa has to proceed at a far accelerated speed. The political climate will not tolerate a long time span. Black patience has been worn too thin.

Our first problem is to determine the size of a non-racial parliament. India with an electorate (not population) of 500 million, has a parliament of 547 members: Britain, with an approximate population of 58 million, has 650 members. South Africa has approximately half Britain's population – about 34 million. Our parliament thus should not exceed 400 members. At the moment, 286 members are representing 25 per cent of the population, the remaining 75 per cent would then be represented by 853 members, giving us a parliament of 1,144! Approximately twice the size of the British and Indian.

While bearing in mind that voting behaviour is sensitive to a vast range of social events, one may compute some predictions of political responses to the constituent assembly on universal suffrage based on the 1989 election results and surveys that have, in recent years,

canvassed party and leadership choices of the disenfranchised. The dominance of the National Party would clearly disappear – the ANC would be in the ascendancy, but its dominance would be moderated by a number of small parties. The majority of Whites, still conscious of group rights, may choose to close their ranks and coalesce into a single party. The ANC could expect to win up to 70-80 per cent of the African votes, almost half the Indian and Coloured and a small percentage of White votes. More Indian and Coloured votes would go to the ANC, than to the Indian Congress and the Coloured Labour Party, if these still remain. In fact, Indians and Coloureds would probably find the Democratic Party/Nationalist coalition more attractive than their ethnic coalitions.

Conclusion

A negotiated settlement is in the interest of all sections of the South African population and, as far as the disenfranchised are concerned, it seems imperative.

The negotiated settlement will be strongly influenced by racial interests regardless of the non-racial, anti-racial rhetoric. The Democratic Party's (DP) insistence on a federal structure, the ANC's on a unitary structure and the Nationalists' emphasis on preserving group interests are all to that end. There will also be an intervening of class interests. The combination of race and class compounded with the fear of being isolated as weak minorities will, in all probability, encourage coalition. The Azanian Peoples Organisation, Black Consciousness and NUM may form a coalition to the left of the ANC, or join the ANC.

The DP/Nat will probably constitute a strong opposition reflecting a considerable body of Indian and Coloured and a minority of African middle-class interests.

Inkatha could well throw in its lot with the DP/Nat, if it does not maintain its independence and if the ANC/MDM do not reconcile with it. This would strengthen further the opposition and may well deprive the ANC of an overall majority.

The chances of the DP joining the ANC, despite all the talking that has been going on, are unlikely because of the ANC's associations with the South African Communist Party and its commitment to a mixed economy. The DP sees itself as the guardian of the liberal democratic free market system.

With these sort of predictions, and the withdrawal of Soviet ambitions for a socialist state in South Africa in the immediate future, Whites really do not have much to fear. In the ultimate analysis, it is the Black Left that will be compromised. Nevertheless, a non-racial parliament will provide it with more room to pursue its objections.

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HAMISH
HAMILTON

HIGHER THAN HOPE

FATIMA MEER

THE AUTHORISED BIOGRAPHY OF NELSON MANDELA

'I WISH TO CONFIRM THAT *HIGHER THAN HOPE* IS THE ONLY BIOGRAPHY WITH WHICH I HAVE COLLABORATED'

NELSON MANDELA

ELIPHAS MUKONOWESHURO

Authoritarian reaction to economic crises in Kenya

The political repression that characterises the Moi regime in Kenya has tended to obscure the economic crises that have bedevilled the country since 1978.[1] During the first decade of independence, economic growth averaged 7 per cent per annum; import substitution flourished; the East African Community (EAC) of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania provided a growing market for Kenyan goods, and the mood of foreign investors – many of whom treated Nairobi as a regional base – was buoyant. But during the subsequent decades the economic picture changed drastically. The economies of Tanzania and Uganda entered a period of chronic decline, largely due to the impact of 'socialism' and the Idi Amin dictatorship, respectively. With the collapse of the EAC in 1977, Tanzania closed its borders with Kenya, with almost disastrous economic consequences for the latter. Manufactured products, which were often overpriced and of mixed quality, became uncompetitive outside the EAC market, and the local import substitution industrialisation process, long shielded by tariffs, became inefficient and entered a period of decline. Consequently, the manifestations of economic decline – growing unemployment, falling living standards and increasing strains in the urban areas – provided the backdrop to the political turbulence of the 1980s.

When the Moi regime came to power in 1978, nearly fifteen years after independence, the Kenyan economy was characterised by the twin crises of unemployment and landlessness. Today, over 90 per

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cent of Kenya's 18 million population (15 million in 1978, half under the age of 15),[2] live on the land, but only 7 per cent of the land has a high cash crop potential, with favourable rainfall, good soils and suitable topographic conditions.[3] The rest of Kenya is agriculturally classified as 'dry bush land' or 'dwarf-shrub grassland', which can only sustain nomadic pastoralists.

Much of this arable land is still controlled by indigenous farmers with large holdings and foreign companies, and produces tea, coffee, sugar, sisal, fruit and beef, mainly for the export market. But half of it is lying idle. With an annual population growth rate of 3.5 to 4.1 per cent* (one of the highest in the world), shortage of land had, by 1978, assumed almost crisis proportions. Good smallholder arable land has been declining gradually. From about 0.75 hectares (4.2 acres) of arable land per head in 1965, it has been estimated that, at current demographic trends, only 0.2 hectares (1.2 acres) of arable land per head will be available by the year 2000.[4]

By 1978, pressure on land resources had become acute. Official statistics (usually very conservative estimates) put the figure of migrant landless peasants in 1976 at 400,000 (or 22 per cent of the indigenous farmers), and increasing at the rate of 15,000 per annum.[5] The landless survive largely by 'illegal' squatting, begging or wage labour (where available) on plantation estates. Of the remaining indigenous farming community, about 44 per cent own less than four acres, earning less than US$120 per annum from agricultural production, and the rest, with slightly larger holdings, earn about US$200. Overall, however, the process of overcrowding has been growing fast, with smallholdings virtually impossible to subdivide in an economic way. Compared to the large plantation estates, the smallholders have traditionally experienced chronic 'access' problems – with little or restricted access to extension services and inputs like fertilisers, pesticides and improved seed varieties. Consequently, diminishing acreage has been punctuated by diminished returns.

To alleviate the problem of landlessness, marginal areas had to be developed, but the costly irrigation schemes required proved to be non-viable financially. Proposals to place ceilings on landownership, to subdivide large plantation estates and to tax idle land proved too politically contentious. Kenya's de facto agrarian capitalist system is too deeply entrenched for short-term radical change. In addition, Kenya has no known mineral resources of any substance, and there is only limited room for the expansion of two of its key exports, tea and coffee, which account for, on average, 40-45 per cent of foreign exchange earnings.

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* At the current rate of growth, Kenya's population will have doubled by the end of the century.

In general, agriculture has witnessed a persistent decline. Between 1964 and 1972, the monetary sector of agriculture managed to push up production by a creditable 5.8 per cent per annum. Subsequently, performance became less impressive. Between 1972 and 1978, agricultural production increased by only 2 per cent, against an annual population growth of 3.9 per cent. In 1979, a year after Moi came to power, agricultural production actually fell in real terms by 1.2 per cent. Maize, the staple food, was hit hardest, with a drop in production from 2 million tonnes in 1978 to only 1.3 million tonnes. Production of coffee, Kenya's most important export, fell by 11 per cent. Tea output increased, but the declining world price meant an overall drop in receipts.[6] A sluggish and stagnant performance in agriculture had serious implications for the economy as a whole, not only in terms of food supply but also for employment. As pointed out above, over 80 per cent of the Kenyan population is employed more or less directly in agriculture. It provides more than 50 per cent of all exports and contributes some 30 per cent to the gross national product. In 1979, the rate of growth of the GDP in Kenya slowed to just 3.1 per cent – equivalent to a real decline in per capita incomes – as the government moved to tackle the persistent imbalance in the balance of payment and the budget. Such a growth rate was only half that of 1978 and two-fifths of the 8.8 per cent achieved in 1977.

In the urban areas, the labour force was growing at the rate of about 250,000 per annum by 1978. Even if there were a 6 per cent increase per year in the 900,000 strong urban wage sector, that still would have left some 200,000 workers jobless,[7] for whom employment had to be found on the land, in the rural industries and in the so-called informal sector, which ranges from pavement cobblers to vegetable hawkers. On average, between 200,000 and 300,000 young people have been entering the job market every year.

Kenya's capitalist project had been vibrant for almost fifteen years, with a 7 per cent real GDP growth per annum between 1963 and 1974, but this rate could not be maintained, and the targets set in the 1978-83 development plan had to be revised. For instance, the plan target was to create 50,000 places in the wage sector each year. However, between 1979 and 1981, only 18,000 unemployed could find jobs.[8]

Hence, the Moi regime came to power against a background of pressing problems and tough policy options. In the rural areas, the subdivision of large estates, which both eased land hunger and raised agricultural output during the Kenyatta era, was no longer feasible, while in the urban areas, the 'Kenyanisation' of an expanding government bureaucracy, which had created an effective job 'sponge', had been completed. The manufacturing sector also slowed down. Since independence, manufacturing had had an average annual growth rate of 9.5 per cent, compared with 6 per cent for the total

GDP. This growth was based on import substitution, and imported consumer goods accounted for 15 per cent of Kenya's import expenditure in 1980 – overall, manufacturing grew by only 7 per cent due to the general down-turn in trade. Inflation stood at 14 per cent and was rising, compounded by a widening trade deficit. Clearly, by the end of the 1970s, the policy of import substitution was coming to an end and the government came down heavily on the side of export manufacture using local raw materials. But this strategy faced tough international competition.

'Shoestring' economics: the Moi era

The closing years of the Kenyatta regime can be regarded as a period of artificial affluence. The Brazilian frost of 1976/77 had the effect of creating a high demand for coffee on the international commodity market, resulting in a windfall for Kenya's two leading agricultural products – tea and coffee. In particular, the coffee boom of 1977/78 saved Kenya from the first ravages of the world recession. But the chance to build on that was wasted. The huge profits and bounteous foreign exchange which flowed in from the high world prices of coffee and tea were dissipated by the indigenous bourgeoisie and the wealthy multinational corporations on the importation of luxury goods. The regime's response was to impose stringent controls on imported luxury goods, resulting in a slump in the retail sector. The huge foreign currency rackets, in operation since the Kenyatta regime, continued unabated and the clampdown on luxury imports resulted in unchecked smuggling.

The break-up of the EAC and its common market added to Kenya's economic woes. Kenya lost the valuable Tanzanian market for its manufactured goods and processed foods. In addition, it, like the other two former EAC states, Tanzania and Uganda, was forced in 1978 to set up its own railways, airways, post and telegraph systems at enormous expense. Formerly, these services had been shared by all three states.

By the end of the 1970s, Kenya faced gloomy economic prospects. Agricultural output, including coffee production, fell,[9] while the global commodity prices of both coffee and tea plummeted. Unfavourable international economic circumstances, culminating in the global recession of the 1980s, were compounded by a series of natural disasters, bad planning, mismanagement and blatant profiteering. For instance, the failure of the short rains in 1979, after a decision had been made to export much of the existing maize reserve, led to acute shortages of the country's staple food crop. For the first time in Kenya's post-independence history, queueing for maize meal in Nairobi and other centres became a feature of the urban scene. Kenya

found itself moving from near self-sufficiency in basic foods to being a large-scale importer in 1980.[10] Apart from that, the objectives of the 1979-83 development plan, which concentrated on health, education and other social services, could not be met during the austerity years that lay ahead.

Nor was there any drastic re-examination of economic policy to deal with the exigencies of the late 1970s and the 1980s. It is, of course, true that the structural weakness of the Kenyan economy had become apparent by the mid-1970s. But the remedies that were advocated then – i.e., increased agricultural productivity of both food and export crops and a shift in the industrial and manufacturing sectors from import substitution to exports – were still those being pursued in the changed economic circumstances of the late 1980s. By 1980, Kenya had become embroiled in the classic Third World trap of soaring oil and general import costs and stagnating export earnings. By 1981, Kenya was spending 30 per cent of its total import bill on oil – at a time when agricultural export earnings were declining, resulting in acute foreign exchange shortages.[11] In 1981, for instance, only 50 per cent of exports were needed to finance imports, as opposed to 1 per cent in 1973.[12]

During the first eight months of 1980, Kenya's official reserves fell to £K50m because of payments for grain and capital goods. In January 1981, official reserves stood at £K196m – not enough to cover three months imports.[13] The country was nearly bankrupt. Applicants for essential raw materials were being denied import licences because the Central Bank had no foreign exchange, and formerly licence-free imports had to be licensed. The situation was further exacerbated by massive smuggling along the porous Kenya-Uganda border. Kenyan products, such as sugar, and other foodstuffs, such as maize, were being smuggled into Uganda, thus depleting Kenya's own foodstocks.

By 1981, the national economic growth rate had slowed down considerably, making it necessary to revise the optimistic projections of the 1979-83 development plan. The Kenyan shilling had to be devalued by 5 per cent in February 1981 and imported goods began to cost more, thereby hitting essential commodities. Food shortages, which had started in 1979, continued into the 1980s, compounded by power cuts due to the prohibitively high oil import bill. This shortage of power, which limited the operation of many of Kenya's industries, ushered in a phase of declining industrial production.

The initial policy measures – taken, supposedly, to rectify the decline in industrial production which was at the root of the economic malaise – were ineffective and populist, designed more to shore up waning political support than to correct the acute structural weaknesses of a neo-colonial economy. In August 1980,[14] the Moi regime announced stern measures to speed up the 'Kenyanisation' of

trade and commerce. Manufacturers were barred from operating as distributors, wholesalers, and retailers, and all wholesale and retail businesses connected with essential commodities were to be the preserve of Kenyans. These measures failed because they were directed at the sphere of circulation rather than industrial production.

The measures that were aimed more directly at industry were equally feeble and populist with no positive consequences for the economy. The strategy chosen was to boost the so-called small and medium industries owned by the Kenyan petty bourgeoisie. The finances for this rather limited project came from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and were to be channelled through the Kenya Commercial Finance Company (KCFC) to various nascent agro-industries, industrial manufacturers, export-oriented and service industries.[15] Local resource based industries with export potential were also considered. But most of this new finance went into paying old debts rather than financing new assets.

By 1982, the Kenyan economy was in the throes of a depression, characterised by exhausted foreign exchange reserves, substantial balance of payments deficits, stagnation in export crops for which international prices were poor, soaring government borrowing, high inflation and a rising debt service ratio. The 1979-83 development plan was based on a forecast of economic growth at an annual average of 6.3 per cent, but by 1982, growth had dropped to 3-3.5 per cent, while the rate of inflation stayed above 20 per cent. Wages had doubled, but the cost of living leapt still further ahead. Kenyans, especially in the urban areas (the poor, in particular), were worse off than they had been five years before, while the national debt (including commercial loans) rose menacingly to an official 24 per cent of the GDP.

The dearth of foreign exchange resulted in many companies running short of imported raw materials and other essential imports, such as fuel and machinery parts.[16] Several prominent companies either went into liquidation or reduced the number of employees. For instance, Bulley's Tanneries, the Thika-based processor and exporter of hides and skins, made its staff of 800 redundant. According to the company, the final straw was the withdrawal of the exports compensation scheme, which had lost it £K164,000 in unpaid claims and another £K200,000 in expected claims on orders executed. Two other companies, Kenya Canners and Bamburi Portland Cement (cement is Kenya's largest manufactured export) also announced lay-offs.

In the textile sector, the economic crisis resulted in its virtual collapse. The regime moved in, not to restructure and revitalise the sector, but to stem the tide of job losses, so that companies such as Kisumu Cotton Mills, the knitwear company Kennit and African Synthetic Fibres had their applications to declare redundancies turned down by the government.

This gloomy industrial picture resulted in high unemployment and a massive deterioration in the living standards of the urban masses – paradoxically, estates and plantations in Kenya were suffering from labour shortage. For, while pressure on land had been intense in many areas, throughout the 1970s leading estates and plantations suffered labour shortages and owners gradually mechanised many operations to maintain productivity. Smallholders in some regions have also found it difficult to procure labour. No labour relocation programme has ever been seriously contemplated by the government.

Throughout the 1960s, the rural sector had always acted as a very effective 'sponge' in absorbing and retaining the population. However, the 'sponge' has not mopped up the labour surplus equitably across the country. The coastal zone suffers chronic shortages in the estates sector, and the central zone's estate sector is in close competition not only with Nairobi's job opportunities, but also with smallholders producing high-priced cash crops. The West, however, faces the most severe population pressure and a definite labour surplus.[17] The urban informal sector increasingly absorbs new arrivals in the cities, but it is unlikely to become a leading sector in development because of the many restrictions, such as the cumbersome and restrictive licensing requirements, that hamper growth.

The world recession and the resultant economic crisis in Kenya also served to expose some of the disgraceful economic decisions of 'joint ventures' that were entered into in the 1970s. The most notorious of these was the Kisumu Molasses Utilisation Plant which, despite being nearly complete, was halted in early 1982 before it even started production. Other projects which have suffered the same fate include the Ken Ren Fertiliser Project and the Nanyuki Polyester Fibre Project. The government and the country have paid dearly for these expensive white elephants – and will continue to do so, because much of the money squandered was in the form of loans still to be paid.

Chronic government runaway expenditure and misexpenditure continued to exacerbate the crisis. The growth of parasitic parastatals, which have waxed fat on government loans and guarantees to the tune of £K900m (between 1964 and 1982) since independence, but have only contributed about £K23.5m since independence, constitutes a serious drain on government coffers. Some of the worst parastatals, such as the Kenya Airways, the Uplands Bacon Factory and the Kenya Cooperative Creameries, relied on government handouts for virtually their entire operational budgets. Nor are they accountable to the public. For example, from its establishment in 1978 till 1982, Kenya Airways did not produce one annual report and statement of accounts. Its drain on the public exchequer in 1982, in terms of accumulated losses, amounted to £K30m.

This type of bad management and general over-expenditure lay at

the root of the financial crisis of the early 1980s. For instance, the government frequently raised money in the form of treasury bonds. At one stage in 1981, the government allowed financial institutions to reduce their liquidity requirements with the Central Bank on condition that the money released was lent to the government. And by 1982, it went as far as virtually bullying the banks to buy more Treasury bonds. Despite this heavy borrowing (which had obvious inflationary implications), the government still found it difficult to balance the budget. In addition, large sectors of production, both public and private, continued to be short of finance when they most urgently needed it. Agriculture, for example, should have been assured of the injection of money it needed for Kenya to return to self-sufficiency in food. But the government, by diverting or 'hijacking' money made in the private sector to pay its own bills, was doing the opposite.

All this resulted in lengthy hold-ups in government payments, cutbacks and stoppages of development projects and late payment of wages to civil servants. High government expenditure could also be attributed to the corruption which plagued ministries consistently. For example, the February 1982 census of primary school teachers revealed that many more were on the payroll than actually teaching. Even in agriculture, corruption and maladministration has remained unchecked. Coffee cooperatives have cheated smallholders by slow and low payment and even by embezzlement. Many pyrethrum and cotton growers had been forced back into growing subsistence crops because of the corruption and incompetence in the respective parastatal marketing boards. Thus, the domestic economic crisis had created a situation of resentment and general alienation in all sectors of society – rural and urban. Groups such as the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie, which had traditionally constituted the basis of Kenyatta's *bonapartist* regime, had become thoroughly disenchanted and their loyalty could only be assured through the sustained repression of dissent. It is in this context of increasing authoritarianism that the abortive coup of August 1982 has to be understood.

Yet, in spite of Kenya's acute economic crisis between 1978 and 1982, western business confidence in the country remained surprisingly high, and, in the early 1980s, a number of western banks established regional offices in Nairobi.[18] Kenya's apparent political stability before August 1982, rather than its economic viability, may have been the reason for the banks' interest: Nairobi was considered a good spot to monitor economic and political developments in East and Central Africa.

Post-1982 economic policies

The attempted coup, spearheaded by some officers of the Kenya airforce and supported by university students and the urban poor, was triggered off by growing poverty, the perception of corruption and the increasingly authoritarian character of the government. Western logistical support,[19] however, saved the regime from overthrow. In strategic terms, Kenya is a valuable western ally because it allows the United States military access to the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa and to two airports,[20] while the British have access to military facilities and terrain to train up to 700 soldiers at any one time. The coup, however, had devastating consequences on the economy of Kenya. The most severe blow was to Kenya's reputation in the West as supposedly immune from the political vicissitudes of the rest of the African continent. Since independence, the government had followed largely capitalist, mixed economy policies, providing attractive terms to foreign investment. After the coup, private western capital embarked on a sustained programme of disinvestment, particularly during the second half of the 1980s.

In the immediate aftermath, the hardest hit sector of the economy was tourism, the second largest foreign exchange earner, but already depressed by rising international airfares. Equally serious, though hard to assess at the time, were the consequences of the way in which Asian shops and homes had been singled out by the looters. This 71,000-strong community controlled 80 per cent of the retail business, thereby playing an important entrepreneurial role. As we shall see below, some members of this community attempted, understandably, to take advantage of their right to live in Britain and, in preparation for such a move, they remitted, by fair means or foul, as much foreign exchange as they could.

Nonetheless, although the confidence of private western capital had been shaken, leading western nations attempted to bolster the Moi regime with increased monetary assistance. By 1985, US aid to Kenya, including military credits, totalled US$350m-550m. Although Britain offered only US$20m of the US$63m initially requested, more aid was granted between 1983 and 1986.

However, this 'rescue' operation by Kenya's western allies did not signal a departure from the economic policies already in operation. Government indecisiveness in policy formulation and implementation, reckless over-expenditure, corruption, maladministration, etc., continued unabated. Instead, the regime concentrated its efforts on repression, targeted on those who had attempted the coup and their supporters, together with a ferocious witch hunt designed to weed out those politicians suspected of disloyalty.[21]

In this passionate attempt to dislodge opponents, Moi called a snap

general election in 1983 – ostensibly to cleanse the system of corruption. Its outcome was a major setback for his strategy of neutralising his opponents. The turnout was the lowest for years and produced much the same old mixed bag of MPs within the confines of the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU), then declared the sole legal party. Although many presidential favourites got into parliament, overall the election did not unseat as many incumbent MPs and cabinet ministers as the President would have hoped. Moi had to look outside the ranks of the elected MPs for key cabinet members such as the new finance minister.

The challenge facing Moi was twofold. He still had to contain political dissent, both within the ranks of his party and outside it. He also had to tackle the inefficiencies and weak management, compounded by corruption, of the government bureaucracy which undermined real efforts to cope with Kenya's economic crisis. None of the latter crucial issues attracted serious presidential attention. Instead, Moi took the opportunity for a major settlement of scores with his political rivals. Basically, he aimed to push loyalists into key government posts and distribute largesse to those supporters outside the government, on the one hand, and, on the other, to marginalise disloyal elements in the government machinery, while bringing financial ruin to their supporters outside. What ensued was a jockeying for power between and within the main tribes (Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya and Kamba), with Moi's own tiny Kalenjin group continuing to capture top government positions.

In May 1983, Moi and his key supporters in government alleged that former Attorney General and Constitutional Affairs Minister Charles Njonjo* was being groomed by a foreign power to take over the presidency. Njonjo was eventually forced to resign his cabinet post and KANU party membership pending the outcome of a judicial inquiry. In addition, Moi moved against Njonjo's supporters in the legislative assembly, the cabinet and the civil service, while those in business were subjected to financial measures which left them almost ruined.

Those business people deemed loyal to the president were rewarded with lucrative economic niches, particularly in the commercial sector. From the middle of 1985, Moi signalled a change in Kenya's open-door investment policy by decreeing that Kenyans would, henceforth, hold controlling interests in all medium level investment joint ventures with foreigners. Hitherto, the liberal policies in force since independence had encouraged multinational companies to invest even without local partners. British companies had built up a

* After Kenyatta's death, Kenya was virtually ruled by a triumvirate consisting of Daniel Arap Moi, Mwai Kibaki (as vice-president) and Charles Njonjo.

large stake in Kenya, with an investment of about US$1 billion. About 125 American companies had put in US$325m, with the pattern of ownership ranging from wholly owned branches to joint ventures with a Kenyan controlling interest.[22]

Supporters of the regime were quick to point out that this policy constituted a 'nationalist' attempt to 'Kenyanise' the economy. It was alleged that it would encourage exports to the Preferential Trade Area, a regional grouping of Eastern and Southern African countries. It was also interpreted as evidence of the regime's sensitivity to public demands for a larger Kenyan stake in the economy so as to create jobs for the unemployed.

In order to give this 'populist' image an agitational twist, Moi made a series of speeches critical of the strong Asian and European influence in local business activity. The regime promised to speed up the process of Kenyanisation to phase out the large expatriate work force and establish a task force to help Kenyans take control of the enterprises which fell vacant as a result of the new policy. However, these policy pronouncements and the subsequent propagandising by the regime's adherents were a gigantic hoax designed to mask the real crisis of confidence that had enveloped both European and Asian capital since the attempted coup. European capital began to implement plans to disinvest, while the Asian business community took to smuggling currency out of Kenya.

Indeed, some of the regime's supporters gained a great deal, buying off western assets on a willing-seller willing-buyer basis, while, by 1986, Moi himself had built a commercial empire comparable to that of the Kenyatta family, [23] and, in spite of vitriolic outpourings against the Asian community, he benefited immensely from business associations with key members of that community. Moi's business interests include prime real estate holdings valued at (conservatively) about US$100m, a construction company, interests in transport and haulage (partly through KENACTO), fuel and petroleum products distribution (through Kobil, a recently formed company connected to a holding company registered in the US and which bought Mobil's interests in Kenya), the cinema once owned by Twentieth Century Fox, at least a share of an important Kenyan bank, Firestone's Kenya operations, food wholesalers and a myriad of other high-profit earning enterprises. The empire, which shows signs of being financially most successful, was built up largely due to the business acumen of a leading member of the Asian community, formerly associated with the Kenyatta family but now co-opted into the Moi entourage as the President's business agent.[24]

In terms of public works, perhaps the most spectacular known deal recently has been the US$205m contract given to the French company Spie Batignolles for the construction of a hydro-electric

dam at Turkwel river. Not only was the contract not put to international tender, but the price tag is reported to be double the actual construction costs on very expensive repayment terms.[25] Interest rates have not been made public, but a large proportion is at commercial rates. Of particular concern is the fact that US$60m is payable in Swiss francs, a currency always strengthening against the Kenya shilling and repayment of which is certain to place a heavy burden on government finances. Other costs included 1,672m French francs (US$256billion) for the main contract signed by Spie Batignolles, which also appointed subcontractors; and 62.5m French francs (US$9.6m) for the design and supervision contract to Sogreach.

It is impossible to say by how much competitive bidding might have reduced these figures, but the EEC claimed that Kenya could have got a cheaper dam if the project had been put out to conventional tender, and if a variety of bilateral funds had been sought. This had been demonstrated two years earlier with the Kiambere hydro schemes, where contracts were let at almost half the World Bank's pre-tendering estimates, purely as a result of competitive bidding. In addition, much of Kiambere's final price of US$350m was covered by lateral grants and soft loans, with the result that Kenya was getting the dam virtually free. Failure to put Turkwel to tender may also mean that Kenya does not get the best design. Some engineers have claimed that the seismic activity of the Turkwel Gorge area makes the site chosen by Sogreach unnecessarily risky. An earlier design by Norwegian consultants in the 1970s would have located the dam elsewhere in the gorge for this reason.

Part of the reason for such 'anomalies' is the fact that the Office of the President assumed control over increasingly large areas of the financial transaction, so much so that the civil service became almost paralysed. Currently, local observers are closely watching the US company Amoco's oil exploration work in the northern Rift Valley, which is shrouded in secrecy. It can be safely presumed that Kobil will be keen to extend into oil production if prospects are good.

All these projects and multi-million dollar deals are, of course, way beyond even the imagination of the aspiring businessmen who constitute the bulk of Moi's keenest supporters. But the president's close association (albeit ambivalent – practical cooperation and rhetorical conflict) with elements of the Asian business community is greatly resented by those Kenyan business elements (especially among the Kikuyu who prospered under Kenyatta) who have been marginalised by the Moi regime. Many of them have now been driven out of even the most humble kiosks in Nairobi. Resentment over Asian purchases of land and property in Meru is particularly strong. Nationwide, there is far more ill-feeling towards the Asians currently than there was at the time of the abortive coup in 1982. Consequently,

if there was to be a repeat of 1982, the Asians might well receive the most violent treatment. Through periodic attacks on the Asian community the regime has made that group a scapegoat and target for the hostility of the mass of the people.

Asian businessmen: scapegoats and pawns

Despite the business connection between some of the leading elements in the Asian business community and top politicians, the Asian community in general has lost confidence in the regime's ability to maintain political stability. Asian jitters started with the resignation of a prominent member of the business community, Acting Chief Justice Channi Madan in December 1986.[26]

Madan had come to prominence when Moi appointed him as one of the commissioners on the public inquiry into Njonjo's affairs. The political nature of the inquiry became obvious when Moi accused Njonjo of conspiring to replace him as Kenya's president. The inquiry thereby ended the immediate threat to Moi from the Kikuyu and their most powerful aspirant to power. The surprise appointment of an Asian judge to what was overtly a political trial had been seen as a reassurance to the Asian community that it would not be made to suffer for its previous support for Njonjo as a patron of European and Asian commercial interests. It was also an invitation to switch Asian financial support not only from Njonjo to Moi, but also away from Njonjo's natural heir, Vice-President Mwai Kibaki.

In a complete about-turn, and in a humiliation of African 'pride' unthinkable in the Kenyatta years, Moi, who had previously bitterly and publicly attacked Asians as the source of corruption in Kenya, began to accuse Africans of the same sins. And to secure Asian financial weight as a political weapon against Kikuyu economic power – until it could be eroded sufficiently to stop it from being a political threat, Moi began to defend Asian interests with even greater vigour and enthusiasm than had Charles Njonjo. Although the local press, including that controlled by the ruling KANU, estimated that Asian commercial interests held over £2.5 billion abroad illegally (i.e., five times the then national foreign exchange reserves), after Moi's rapprochement with Asian businessmen, few, if any, Asians were prosecuted for foreign exchange control offences. For example, the former acting managing director of the KANU-controlled *Kenya Times* (since dismissed for having an unauthorised interview with the BBC) suddenly halted on official orders the publication of a series of no fewer than thirty-eight articles on how Asian businessmen smuggled wealth out of Kenya. So substantial has been the outflow of Kenya-generated wealth that even the International Monetary Fund has repeatedly drawn the attention of the Kenyan Treasury to the

contradiction between the flight of several hundred million dollars annually and Kenya's hard currency borrowing on the overseas market.

The Kenyan press has suggested repeatedly that the foreign currency leakage could be traced to officials within the Kenyan Central Bank itself, since it has to authorise all import licences. The over-invoicing of the dollar value of imports is a major mechanism for transferring foreign exchange from the Kenyan Treasury to Asian private bank accounts abroad. On the other hand, African, particularly Kikuyu, businessmen have been prosecuted for sums that seem trifling in comparison with the huge sums exchanged on the Asian-controlled black market. Furthermore, Asian financiers continue to be allowed to run their own bank, the Biashara Bank of Kenya. By ensuring that Asian profits retained in Kenya are available to Asian businessmen, the bank enables businessmen to keep a minimal amount of working capital within Kenya.

The Asians have been used as pawns in the ethnic political game. Moi has been keen to use his economic relations with the Asian community as a political weapon against the Kikuyu, who do not only constitute the largest ethnic group, but whose elite is clearly the largest African factor in the control of the country's economy. Apparently, Moi has been aware that if opposition to his rule should grow to the point of active resistance, then Kikuyu businessmen could, if they wished, bring the economy to a standstill within a space of a few months. He therefore came to view his relationship with the Asian business community as a counterweight to Kikuyu economic power.

However, the honeymoon between Moi and the Asian commercial community seems to have been shattered in the wake of the Madan resignation. Madan lost the goodwill of the president almost immediately by acquitting Moi's arch-enemy Stanley Githinguri (former governor of the National Bank and close associate of Njonjo) in mid-1986 on currency smuggling charges. The sensational acquittal of Githinguri served as a clear public message that the Asian business community would not allow itself to be used as a political pawn in Moi's struggle against the Kikuyu. Indeed, it was also a clear signal of its negative assessment of whether Moi could control the increasingly vehement Kikuyu opposition to his own Kalenjin-dominated government. The acquittal was widely understood as a refusal by the Asian business community to antagonise further the Kikuyu, by creating a visible distance between it and the president. The fact that Moi had succeeded in placing Kalenjin supporters, many without previous administrative experience, into key posts in the cabinet, the security organisations and the civil service as a whole did not convince the Asians of the government's ability to withstand a determined Kikuyu

onslaught. For the Asian businessmen, the vision of an eventual Kikuyu 'victory' raises the spectre of expulsion and obvious financial ruin. Hence the reversal of their previous stance – public closeness to the president – as a protection from mass anti-Asian sentiment.

The record low hit by the Kenya shilling on the Nairobi black market reflected the crisis of confidence felt by the powerful Asian commercial interest. As pointed out above, because of the close and mutually advantageous relationship between Moi and the majority of the Asian business community, the regime had turned a blind eye to its blatant currency infringements. As a result, a black market flourished in dollars, sterling and rupees. This illegal market had been allowed to operate so freely that, in spite of theoretically stringent exchange control laws, the Kenya shilling became, in fact, more easily exchangeable than any other currency in black Africa. Daily quotations of sterling and dollars became readily available by telephone from a dozen or more Asian trading houses in Kenya. The currency, known during the presidency of Jomo Kenyatta as the 'Swiss Franc' of Africa, reached an unprecedented low rate of 24 Kenya shillings to the US dollar by June 1987[27] – lower than it did during the panic of 1972 when former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin expelled Asians en masse.

Asians in Kenya are conscious that they constitute not only a highly privileged group, but also a particularly visible one. Every Asian family is aware of how intensely hated their community is among the African population of about 18 million, with whom its degree of socio-cultural integration is almost non-existent. Thus, the Asian community suffers an acute fear of the kind of instability which the ever present risk of a change of regime might bring, and with it the possibility of a government less favourably disposed towards this privileged minority. Convinced that they will one day be forced to leave Kenya, many businessmen keep most of their money abroad.

Divisions have, however, appeared within the Asian business community about future positions. On the one hand, there are the so-called 'Madan reformists' who want to open up a channel of communication with the Kikuyu, even if this is at the expense of relations with Moi. On the other, stand those whose fortunes are so closely linked to the president's future that it seems too late to change now.

No longer able to take Asian commercial support for granted, Moi has again resorted to denouncing that community, utilising the mass resentment against it. To the average Kenyan, the Asians appear as both economic exploiters and unpatriotic opportunists whose only interest in Kenya is as a wealth-generating machine. Consequently, opportunist politicians have accused the Asians of keeping one foot in Kenya and one abroad. In particular, the Moi regime has resuscitated the integration issue, accusing Asians of refusing to become part of the

larger Kenyan society. As a whole, however, the government has vacillated between closing the issue and allowing it to be re-opened at judiciously timed intervals.

Apart from these sorts of attacks on the Asians, the government has launched a co-ordinated strategy to clamp down on Asian financial activities. During the latter half of 1987, at least twenty Asian businessmen were arrested in Nairobi for illegal currency transactions. In September 1987, police arrested several Asian coffee dealers/traders and some of the executives of the Biashara Bank of Kenya and the Asian-owned Bank of Credit and Commerce International, both of which were temporarily suspended from foreign exchange dealings.[28] Those arrested in the 'coffee swindle' appear to be small fry from Nairobi's River road area, dominated by small Asian business long suspected of involvement in the black market currency dealing; while the banks were allegedly involved in the failure to remit about 600m Kenya shillings (about £22m) in the foreign exchange earned from coffee. Some 150m Kenya shillings have been recovered, but in early October 1987, two coffee dealers, and the chairman and another director of the Biashara Bank were charged with contravening the Exchange Control Act by failing to ensure the remittance of 465m Kenya shillings in proceeds from coffee exports.[29]

These amounts probably represented the tip of the iceberg of unremitted export earnings and other illicit capital outflows, which in 1987 resulted in a dip in foreign exchange reserves from more than three to two-and-a-half months' import cover. While a political strategy to thwart the Asian bourgeoisie may be behind this clampdown, it is also possible that the cause could be the decline in coffee and tea prices. However, the clampdown shook Asian business confidence in the regime, as registered on the black market. For instance, the premium on the official rate for foreign exchange offered by the black market rose to more than 40 per cent – for a number of years it had hovered around 20 per cent, reflecting Kenya's relative neo-colonial prosperity and sound currency.

Overall, then, the Moi regime has been trying to cut a 'populist' image by taking measures designed to convince the public that it was not in the pockets of Asian businessmen. It seems that Moi strategists have realised that Asian support for Githinguri has given the Kikuyu a vital card: a leader to unite behind.

Thwarting the Kikuyu bourgeoisie: the 1986 bank crisis

If the regime has an ambivalent relationship with the Asian community, when it comes to dealing with the Kikuyu bourgeoisie, it has always acted with determination to keep it effectively neutralised. One major opportunity for this strategy was afforded by the August

1986 financial crisis, coupled with the ineptness of the Kikuyu financiers.

The growth of the financial sector in Kenya between 1980 and 1986 had been quite phenomenal. In 1972, there were only eight financial institutions in Kenya; by 1980, there were about twice as many.[30] Then, between 1980 and 1984, the number rose dramatically – from sixteen to forty – and by the time of the 1986 bank crisis, there were a total of twenty-seven commercial banks, six building societies and forty-six other financial institutions. About 75 per cent of all these institutions were run by Kikuyu interests. However, most of them were grossly under-capitalised, with greedy chairmen and directors loaning themselves money on favourable terms, while keeping inaccurate records to camouflage these activities.

The wave of bank failures started with a private bank, the Continental Bank of Kenya, which had overstretched its resources during the previous year and had only stayed in business by borrowing from the Central Bank of Kenya. It had incurred debits of about 257m Kenya shillings when the Central Bank of Kenya decided to stop lending. Another government financial institution, the Kenya Commercial Bank, also refused to accept cheques drawn on accounts held at the Continental Bank of Kenya. Meanwhile, Continental Credit Finance had lost 25m Kenya shillings which it had loaned to the short-lived Rural Urban Credit Finance, besides owing 75m Kenya shillings to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and similarly large amounts to the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF).

A bid to save the two companies by a consortium of businessmen was turned down by the Central Bank, almost certainly under instructions from the government. It did not want one group of Kikuyu businessmen to succeed where others had failed. Attempts to borrow from other financial institutions only served to advertise the crisis to the entire financial community. Expatriate banks demanded the repayment of loans by suspect borrowers and the Central Bank of Kenya refused to bail out organisations that it considered beyond salvation. Individual depositors panicked and besieged the banks to demand repayment. Managers of parastatals, including the NSSF and NHIF, also recalled their deposits. Kenya's entire banking sector came close to collapse as one company failure led to another in a chain reaction. In particular, the Continental group of companies had virtually crumpled.

It is in the context of this financial crisis that the Moi regime moved to break the back of the Kikuyu financial plutocracy. The Kenyan government has enormous power to make or break financial institutions because the Kenyan money market is dominated by the state. State-controlled monopolies, cooperatives and local authorities control 80 per cent of the funds disposable in the market; the remaining 20

per cent is controlled by foreign and Kenyan Asian companies, leaving other Kenyans with virtually no share. The failed banks were seriously undercapitalised, which further reduced their staying power in the face of government hostility to them. In such circumstances, the government embarrassed financial institutions it did not favour by playing the money markets, especially blocking parastatal deposits to out-of-favour banks and demanding repayment of deposits already placed with such institutions.

Moreover, since the state controls the money market, it can prevent firms from borrowing. It is this enormous controlling power which the state utilised to exacerbate the financial crisis of the Kikuyu oligarchy. All in all, ten Kikuyu-controlled financial institutions collapsed. This provided an opportunity (albeit unsuccessful) for the government to drive a wedge between the Kikuyu *Wanachi* (common people), who had lost their money, and some of the most influential leaders of their community. Moi used the occasion to pose as champion of the common people, while also disposing of some of his most powerful opponents. The resulting attack on Kikuyu high finance had struck some of his hitherto unassailable rivals. The directors of the Continental Bank of Kenya and Rural Urban Finance Credit were arrested and the failed companies put into receivership, thus effectively silencing the Kikuyu financiers. Moi appointed a Special Investigations Committee (SIC) to investigate the scandal. And, significantly, the Central Bank was asked to examine surviving institutions to ensure that there would be no further bankruptcies. Thus, having made its point to the Kikuyu bourgeoisie, the regime then attempted to strengthen the financial structure of the country, thereby restoring a semblance of confidence. However, the settlement of scores with the Kikuyu and the periodic harassment of the Asians has not been conducive to business and investment confidence during the late 1980s.

The contemporary economic situation

The political turbulence of the early 1980s has not subsided. Instead, its effects have started to alter drastically the quality of Kenya's neo-colonial pattern of development. Western multinational corporations which chose Kenya as a possible bridgehead for investment forays not only in the East African region, but throughout Central Africa as well, began to sell-off to local interests. At stake in Kenya has been that country's historic role as a field for international investment and its so-called political stability – both of which are intimately connected.

Among the major multinationals which have sold off Kenyan holdings during the past few years are the US rubber giant Firestone,

Marshalls, which held the East African franchise for the French motor-car manufacturer Peugeot, Mobil Oil, the Commercial Bank of Africa and the First National Bank of Chicago. However, the extent of what has amounted virtually to western capital's divestment has been little recognised because it has been carried out with the utmost discretion. No public share offers have been made and companies have preferred instead to use what are termed 'private arrangements'. The secrecy attached to divestment negotiations has partly been to avoid shaking political and economic confidence. But equally crucial has been the question of obtaining Central Bank of Kenya approval for payment in hard currency from the country's official reserves. This can only be done with discretion and high level approval.

Some multinationals have viewed appeals for 'Kenyanisation' as an opportunity to withdraw all or part of their investment without either financial loss or negative publicity – in an obvious reversal of their strategies in the 1960s and 1970s, during the more 'stable' Kenyatta presidency. At that time, before the world recession of the 1980s and the attempted coup of August 1982, multinationals regarded government pressure towards the local purchase of stock as tantamount to nationalisation.[31] Indeed, western investors resisted political pressure to sell out to local interests, of which coffee plantations and the Bata Shoe Company were frequent targets. Overseas companies usually limited their Kenyan participation to operating under Kenyan-sounding names – thus British Unilever became East African Industries, Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) became Twiga Chemicals and Mobil became Kobil.

The attitude of the multinationals has now changed radically as they take advantage of the possibility of selling off their local subsidiaries on condition that payment is made in convertible currency. Of course, a multinational company can always sell assets of land, plant, and equipment on the open market if it wishes to withdraw from Kenya, or it can offer a public flotation on the Nairobi Stock Exchange. But in both cases, the seller requires approval from the Central Bank to convert proceeds into hard currency for repatriation overseas. Such approval can take months, at a time when the official exchange rate has sharply declined. Consequently, if the sale is carried out directly through a well-connected local buyer, as has happened in many recent cases, exchange control approval can, in effect, be taken for granted. The fact that local purchases of foreign assets have been made in precious foreign currency has resulted in a squeeze on foreign exchange, thereby aggravating a hard currency shortage of essential imports.

For Kenyan businessmen, one of the advantages of purchasing foreign companies has been that such purchases enabled them to use

the newly acquired company, which usually retains its previously well-known name, to gain access to official foreign exchange reserves, since part of the hard currency so obtained has, at times, been illegally exported.

But why have the leading multinationals reversed their previous investment policy? It would seem that their new attitude to the wisdom of investing in Kenya stems primarily from a reassessment of political risks. There is a growing feeling in business circles that the underlying causes of political discontent, which led to the 1982 attempted coup, have increased rather than receded in recent years. This reassessment has been coupled with the long-term deterioration of the country's exchange reserves. For instance, in 1984, 11 Kenya shillings were needed to buy US$1 at the official exchange rate. By 1987/88, at the most favourable exchange rate 22 Kenya shillings were required to buy US$1. This meant that even if the hurdle of repatriating funds can be overcome, the rate of return on the original hard currency investment has declined sharply.

Finally, the general state of the Kenyan economy has not encouraged expanded foreign investment or reinvestment of locally produced profits. Kenya has borrowed heavily abroad to finance internal needs – to finance the domestic borrowing requirement, Kenya has had to borrow about £490m for the parastatal sector alone.[32] As a reduction in parastatal debts can be effected only by politically unpopular structural adjustments which will produce unemployment, there is little prospect of significant remedial action.

The total foreign debt now exceeds US$4 billion, while the critical debt service ratio has slipped from 7 per cent during the coffee boom of the late 1970s, to a level where more than 20 percent of foreign currency earnings are committed to mandatory annual repayments and interests. Western banks and other creditors are now showing increasing caution in lending to Kenya. With all these financial and political crises, any replay of the dramatic events of August 1982 could well result in the overthrow of an already tottering regime.

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JOHN NEWSINGER

A counter-insurgency tale: Kitson in Kenya

Among the most important and revealing first-hand accounts of modern British counter-insurgency operations is Frank Kitson's *Gangs and Counter-Gangs*, a memoir of his experiences during the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya. According to one recent apologetic study of British colonial wars this century, Kitson's book 'graphically etches the career of the lone officer in the exotic unknown' and ' bears comparison with the works of T.E. Lawrence, not least for its skill in story-telling'.[1] Certainly, the book is of considerable interest. It is constructed as an adventure story but is also concerned to advocate a particular counter-insurgency technique: the use of counter- or pseudo-gangs. Kitson recounts his own personal battle with darkest Africa at the same time as providing an exposition of the intelligence-gathering and gang-busting methods that he developed there and which he has since continued to advocate, most notoriously in his *Low Intensity Operations*, an unsuccessful attempt to theorise a British National Security State. An interrogation of this earlier and apparently less contentious work is useful for a number of reasons: for the way in which Kitson chooses to portray himself, for its account of the counter-gang technique in action and, more broadly, for what it has to say or, rather, not say about the British counter-insurgency campaign in Kenya. The book is an important and influential exercise in sanitising the bloodiest of post-war British military operations, of reducing the struggle of the Mau Mau freedom fighters in the face of the most savage repression to the level of a *Boys' Own* adventure story.

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Race & Class, 31(4), (1990)

Kitson, the son of a vice admiral, joined the British army at the start of 1945 and spent the first seven years of his career stationed with the Rifle Brigade in Germany. In July 1953 he was given an intelligence posting in Kenya, then in the grip of the Mau Mau rebellion. His knowledge of the conflict was, as he acknowledges, rudimentary, although he already shared the prevailing view energetically propagated by the colonial authorities that the rebellion was some sort of reversion to savagery, an atavistic upsurge of witchcraft and black magic that had overwhelmed the African mind as it tried to cope with modernisation. Mau Mau was already associated in his mind 'with all that was foul and terrible in primitive savagery' and the Kikuyu were living in 'a web of superstition which bound the whole tribe in thrall to an unseen world of spirits, omens, curses and blood'. As he read up on the subject, 'I too felt that fear, flickering faintly across the four thousand miles which separated me from the Kikuyu.' Once he had actually arrived in the country and took a first walk through Nairobi, he saw three blacks squatting around a fire, a scene which instantly brought to mind 'stories . . . of age-old magic rites, of bestiality, obscenity and the power of unseen forces'.[2] In good part his book is the story of how a young European soldier confronted, wrestled with and mastered this African heart of darkness, a recurring theme in imperial literature, Conrad notwithstanding.

The rebellion, according to Kitson, was the work of a handful of intelligent Kikuyu, who had been educated in Europe, and now wanted advancement and power. This was not possible. Embittered, they looked for popular grievances to exploit and fixed upon the Kikuyu tribe's chronic land hunger. They channeled this into resentment against the European settlers who were quite unjustly, according to Kitson, accused of having stolen Kikuyu land. One other ingredient was necessary to give these men domination over the tribe. The activities of the European missions had undermined traditional Kikuyu beliefs, but had not replaced them with Christianity – and into the gap stepped Mau Mau. The agitators reached back into the tribe's savage past and produced powerful oaths and bestial rituals that were used to fasten their control over the tribe with the intention of overthrowing European rule. They exercised a nightmare reign of terror over the tribe from which the Europeans would have to liberate it. This reworking of the customary conspiracy theory with all the trappings of black magic and ancient superstition was a powerful brew that played a vital role in allowing the military and the police a free hand in crushing Mau Mau.[3]

The reality of the rebellion was, of course, very different. Mau Mau was a response to the coming together of three areas of discontent among the Kikuyu: the worsening plight of the growing numbers of landless peasants in the Reserves, the escalating conflict between

Kikuyu squatters and European farmers in the White Highlands, and the increasing militancy of the embryonic working class in Nairobi. For more and more Kikuyu their standard of life was deteriorating in the post-war period, deteriorating moreover at a time when there was a widespread expectation of improvement and change, and increasing confidence to demand it. This social unrest was closed off from any reformist amelioration by the steadfast refusal of the Labour government in London to contemplate any challenge to settler domination.[4]

In these circumstances, Mau Mau spread throughout the Kikuyu, enrolling the great majority of them in its ranks and preparing for an eventual confrontation with the colonial government. They were pre-empted, however, when the Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, declared a state of emergency in October 1952 and set about eradicating the movement by means of mass arrests and detentions, widespread beatings and shootings. The Mau Mau were forced into rebellion before they were prepared. Only gradually was the movement able to establish fighting bands in the forests, the Land and Freedom Armies, and an underground support network, the so-called Passive Wing, that was centred on Nairobi but extended throughout the settled Areas and the Reserves. The authorities were taken completely by surprise by this development. They had expected to be able to destroy the movement almost overnight by eliminating its leadership and activists, but now found that it was much too deeply rooted for such police methods to succeed. By the beginning of 1953 the Mau Mau had started to strike back and for a while the British found that they had lost the initiative and felt themselves to be in danger of being overwhelmed. Only a chronic shortage of modern weapons prevented the Mau Mau from inflicting punishing defeats on the British in this phase of the conflict, thus giving them the time to recover and launch a full-scale war against the rebellion

This was the situation when Captain Kitson arrived. He was attached to Special Branch as a district military intelligence officer (DMIO) with responsibility for Kiambu and the neighbouring district of Thika: Nairobi was later added to his responsibilities. Kiambu and Nairobi were vital base areas for the Land and Freedom Armies, where fresh recruits, supplies and weapons were assembled for despatch to the forests. There was little Mau Mau activity so as to avoid any danger of this function being disrupted. For Kitson, who was eager for action, this was an intense disappointment: 'there hadn't been any murders in Kiambu for three weeks' and when his first opportunity for killing someone did arrive, the three Africans who provided him with 'a perfect target' turned out to be policemen! Instead, Kitson energetically set about establishing his own intelligence organisation. His was one of the most important posts in any

counter-insurgency campaign. Intelligence together with control over the civil population are the determinants of success. The security forces invariably have the advantage over the rebel forces in terms of firepower and combat training, but cannot bring these advantages to bear because they cannot find the guerrillas. Effective intelligence organisation is crucial.

Mau Mau activity began to increase in Kiambu from October 1953 onwards with a series of attacks that the police and military were completely unable to prevent. This culminated in an incident on Christmas Eve when a forty-strong gang was cornered on the main Nairobi road three miles south of Thika. It had already shot dead the Black Watch company commander who had stumbled upon it at the head of a patrol and wounded two policemen before being trapped in a shallow valley, hiding out in the thick undergrowth as night fell. An attempt was made to burn the members of the gang out by firing the bush so as to shoot them down in the open as they fled from the flames. Instead, the Mau Mau neatly turned the tables. When flares were fired to illuminate the scene, they took the opportunity to pick off the troops and police, nicely silhouetted against the skyline, from their cover which was obstinately refusing to burn. They killed a police district commandant, seriously wounded his deputy and killed another policeman before it was realised what was happening. After this setback, the British settled down to wait for dawn so as to finish off the gang in the light of day. After enough time had elapsed for them to relax, the Mau Mau rushed the cordon and broke through, shooting two more policemen in the process, one of whom subsequently died. This Christmas debacle did nothing to maintain confidence that the military were getting on top of the rebellion. As Kitson recalled, 'In one way and another things seemed pretty black in Kiambu and Thika during the last days of 1953.'[5]

Kitson's intelligence responsibility quickly expanded so that he was soon in charge of three DMIOs and eight field intelligence officers, together with their African soldiers and police. They relied for information on the recruitment of informers and on the interrogation of prisoners, operating out of fortified camps which were built by forced labour. The counter-gang technique developed almost incidentally out of the enthusiastic assistance he received from one particular Mau Mau prisoner who proved especially useful in helping set ambushes, in the arrest of Passive Wing members and, on a number of occasions, actually rejoining Mau Mau gangs to set them up for destruction. Out of this experience came a decision to disguise his own black soldiers as Mau Mau and to set about turning other Mau Mau prisoners so as to form pseudo-gangs under his control. These could then identify the Passive Wing network and establish close contact with the genuine gangs either operating in or moving through

the area. After much heartsearching it was decided that heavily disguised Europeans should take charge of the gangs. By the early summer of 1954 the new technique was already starting to produce results and Kitson felt that he was beginning to seize the initiative in the conflict. Instead of merely responding to the activities of the guerrilla bands, as had been the case so far, he was now able to find them before they struck.[6]

At the same time as Kitson was achieving this tactical breakthrough, the campaign had reached its strategic turning point. In late April the British Commander-in Chief, General Sir George Erskine, launched 'Operation Anvil'. This involved a force of 25,000 troops and police rounding up for systematic screening, none too gently, the entire African population of Nairobi. Some 15,000 Africans, overwhelmingly Kikuyu, were placed in detention and thousands more were deported back to the Reserves. Kitson took part in one typical screening operation where a row of hooded informers picked out suspects who were promptly arrested. This massive operation dealt Mau Mau a devastating blow, effectively eliminating its underground network in Nairobi, abruptly cutting off the flow of recruits and supplies to the Land and Freedom Armies, placing them on the defensive and forcing them to rely more and more on their already impoverished supporters in the Reserves. There seems little doubt that Kitson had this successful operation in mind when he put 'Operation Demetrius', the introduction of internment, into effect in Belfast in August 1971. There, the outcome was somewhat different.

After clearing Nairobi, Erskine turned his attention to Kiambu and other districts, carrying out similar operations involving wholesale screening of the African population and the mass detention of suspects. This was accompanied by the beginning of a programme of compulsory villagisation, forcibly concentrating the African population in the Reserves into guarded new villages, 'strategic hamlets', where they could be policed and controlled. By the end of 1955 over a million people had been resettled in nearly 900 of these camps. The Land and Freedom Armies were now effectively sealed off from the people, driven back deeper into the forests, often starving, unable to replace their losses and without supplies. It was in this context, where the tide had already turned, where Mau Mau had already suffered defeat at the strategic level, that Kitson began to introduce the counter-gang technique and achieve spectacular results.[7]

In June 1954 Kitson was summoned to GHQ to brief DMIOs from other districts on the counter-gang technique and a training school was established to speed its general introduction. By now he was provincial MIO for Central Province South and recognition of his efforts came in September when he was promoted to major.

There was still plenty of killing to be done, however, before the

rebellion was finally crushed. One Mau Mau band, led by Mwangi Toto, was particularly active throughout August and September, regularly attacking Kitson's fortified camp at Kamiti – attacks which he described as 'hopeless' but still 'unpleasant'. Kitson worried continually that one or more of the ex-terrorists working with the counter-gangs might change his mind during one of these attacks, in which case 'I stood to lose my head and various other parts as well.' On another occasion, in mid-September, Toto was to storm successfully the prison camp at Lukenya, freeing the detainees, but he was killed the following month. By this time, as Kitson himself makes clear, 'the tide of events was flowing strongly against the Mau Mau' and the guerrilla bands 'which six months earlier had been running riot . . . had been forced back into the depths of the forest'. The Kiambu Mau Mau were now held together by the efforts and exploits of one man, Waruingi Kurier. At this point in his account, Kitson adopts a new narrative strategy, turning his story into a personalised conflict between himself and Kurier, between the hunter and his prey. He took on a personal commitment to eliminate the elusive Mau Mau leader.

As far as Kitson was concerned the counter-gang technique was without any doubt 'the most effective means of getting information, and killing Mau Mau gangsters'. He demonstrates this by means of his account of the final downfall of Waruingi Kurier. In July 1955 'Operation Dante', a large-scale operation involving four battalions of troops, artillery and the RAF, was launched to try to destroy the last organised guerrilla bands in Kiambu. The forest was bombed and shelled in an attempt to drive the Mau Mau on to the guns of the troops, but without any great success. The unpalatable fact was 'that the army of that time was not efficient at killing terrorists in the forests. In the first thirty-six contacts only eight Mau Mau were killed.' Kitson regarded the army's blundering into the forest as the least likely way to find the guerrillas, and even when contacts did occur, as often as not the guerrillas would escape unharmed. Hitherto he had never actually used the counter-gang technique in the forest itself, but now, in pursuit of Kurier, he determined to send them in. Kurier had, in fact, managed to avoid 'Operation Dante' altogether, slipping away south, to the edge of the Lari forest. Here it was decided to combine the counter-gang technique with the newly devised population sweep, whereby thousands of Africans would be recruited to clear a stretch of forest, hacking away the bush in a gigantic sweep along an area believed to contain Mau Mau. Over 15,000 Africans were involved in this operation. The counter-gang soon made contact with a group of Kurier's personal bodyguard and shot dead his wife, Kenya Tea. Hardpressed by Kitson's men and desperately trying to avoid the sweep, Kurier was finally killed by a policeman. He was 'in a

shocking state, with twenty-eight bullet holes . . . more like a cullender than a corpse', Kitson cheerfully remarks – his book contains a photograph of Kurier's body propped up against a fence. This last success, as far as Kitson was concerned, marked a fitting end to his involvement in the Kenya Emergency. As he observed, with regard to an earlier manhunt: 'one cannot savour the full thrill of the chase until one hunts something which is capable of retaliation'. Significantly, the final image the book contrives to leave is of a successful mobilisation of the African people themselves against Mau Mau, a vindication of the British stand.[8]

A theme that runs through the whole of *Gangs and Counter-Gangs* is Kitson's personal confrontation with the dark mysteries of Africa. The counter-gang technique of necessity involved close personal contact with men who only a short while before had been involved in Mau Mau, had taken its oaths, performed its rituals and sometimes killed in its cause. He found that the more he mixed with these men, the better he 'was able to tackle those vague fears that had formerly assailed me with regard to those unseen evils which I visualised welling up from the depths of ancient Africa'. Working to turn Mau Mau prisoners forced him into 'working out my attitude to the prevailing atmosphere of superstition, cruelty, obscenity and magic. Everyone connected with the Emergency had to do this.' He tried to demystify the oathing ritual. What did it consist of, after all? A cat hung on a stick, an arch of thorns with goats' eyes impaled on them, the knuckle of a dead man and the initiates abusing themselves into a bowl of blood and then drinking it – 'prep school stuff . . . The whole business when looked at carefully is no more than the antics of naughty schoolboys.' He had no inhibitions about working with men who had been oathed, about entrusting his life to them on occasions; indeed, 'I often felt far closer to these people as a result of our shared experiences than I do to more normal acquaintances.'

There were still worries, however. The ease with which he found it possible to relate to his renegades he came to put down to the fact that he was 'just a little bit more like a terrorist than some of our commanders'. Indeed, sometimes he was concerned about how much his

> ideas and mental processes had changed . . . I wondered how much of the African mentality I had absorbed. Was I becoming callous, ruthless and treacherous – to mention some of their less attractive characteristics? In the sharp darkness of the Kikuyu forest it was easier than ever to feel the influence of Ngai and Mau Mau and Africa. Perhaps the spirit of the oath really did exist and was crawling over me in spite of the way in which I had mocked it.

On one occasion he hired a witch doctor to break down a suspect's

denials and was convinced by the information he provided that he was able to read the prisoner's thoughts: 'The whole business was absolutely genuine'! But there was to be no surrender to the heart of darkness. It was exorcised in the course of the Mau Mau defeat.

One of the reasons for Kitson's success in counter-insurgency operations was his refusal to hate the enemy, his readiness to treat them with a degree of respect. He makes quite clear his professional regard for Mau Mau leaders such as General Kago, and his genuine liking for many of the men who fell into his hands. He pays tribute to Nderitu Mugambo, who provided him with immense quantities of intelligence, all of it lies, to secure a light sentence, and to the unknown prisoner who made a run for it under escort and 'got clean away'. He particularly liked Nyaga, a young Mau Mau, 'typical of the better type of terrorist', who had a terrific sense of humour and was very keen to enrol him into his unit. Unfortunately, Nyaga's activities were too well known and he had to be handed over to the hangman. As far as Kitson was concerned, the best Mau Mau 'had joined the gangs from a spirit of adventure . . . they thought it would be fun to be a gangster and carry a pistol and kill their acquaintances. Their outlook was not far from that of many young men of spirit anywhere else in the world.' He had no time for those 'who were fanatically keen on the movement politically'. Of course, these sentiments tell us considerably more about Kitson himself and about the character of those Mau Mau he turned than they do about the tens of thousands of Kikuyu who withstood the full weight of British repression.

One incident in particular illuminates his attitude and marks his account of the Emergency out as unique. He was involved in the interrogation of a Mau Mau leader whose band had come upon two European boys in the forest and had killed them both. The man was resigned to the fact that he was certain to be hanged. Kitson asked why they had killed children and was asked in return whether British troops would have spared young Mau Mau: 'I had seen too many bodies of Mau Mau aged 15 or so to pursue the argument any further.' The often hysterical hatred that characterises other firsthand European accounts of Mau Mau is altogether absent. Kitson maintains a thoroughly professional attitude. As far as he was concerned, it was useless for a soldier 'to be critical of individual incidents . . . What is foul murder from one point of view may be unavoidable unpleasantness from another and even a triumph from a third.' This professional distancing from the detail of the conflict paradoxically made his efforts at defeating Mau Mau all the more effective.[9]

How then were Mau Mau prisoners turned, how were they recruited into the counter-gangs and persuaded to help hunt down their former comrades? Taming, as he called it, involved three stages. First, the prisoner would be treated harshly, kept chained and poorly

fed to 'make him realise that he was not such a wonderful hero as he supposed'. This stage was, at least nominally, non-violent. Then, when his self-esteem had been sufficiently demolished, it would be rebuilt on Kitson's terms. The prisoner would be unchained and employed doing routine menial jobs around the camp, gradually integrated into the unit. If this worked out the last stage saw him sleeping with the others, doing guard duty and going out on patrol. In *Gangs and Counter-Gangs*, Kitson's emphasis is on the psychological aspects of the process of conversion whereby the prisoner is knocked down and then rebuilt as his opposite, a renegade. In his later book, *Bunch of Five*, he is more forthcoming about the consequences of failing to cooperate, about 'the alternative of a death sentence' if they were instead sent for trial.[10] The gallows was a permanent feature of the Kenyan landscape throughout the Emergency.

Gangs and Counter-Gangs is effective on a number of levels: as an advocacy of the counter-gang technique, as an adventure story and as an elaboration of colonial myths about darkest Africa. It is most telling, however, in what it does not say, what it remains silent about. The fact is that the Mau Mau rebellion was not the exotic background for a *Boy's Own* adventure, was not the story of a young white man's personal struggle with the African darkness, was not even a golden opportunity to develop new tactics in counter-insurgency warfare. It was a mass uprising involving tens of thousands of African men and women in the fight for land and freedom and justice. Despite an almost complete lack of modern weaponry, with no secure bases or help from abroad, with only rudimentary political organisation, the Mau Mau fought the British for four years, withstanding the most savage repression. The scale of this repression has never been fully realised or come to terms with even by the Left in Britain. It provides an essential context for Kitson's book.

The most brutal methods, both official and unofficial, were used by the Security Forces during the course of the Emergency, more brutal than in any other post-war conflict, and yet with remarkably little public outcry. There was, as one critic of British policy observed at the time, 'a tacit conspiracy involving the Kenya government, the police and the press not to reveal or even hint at anything which the outside world would term acts of brutality or callous behaviour towards the Kikuyu'. This was at a time when the 'beating of prisoners and suspects became almost a routine measure . . . Every European in the security forces knew about these beatings, talked about them and very often had ordered them or participated in them.'[11] One recent account of British colonial warfare describes how

> As the struggle in the countryside intensified, the mood of those holding the Mau Mau at bay became more and more remorseless.

> Two days after the Ruck murders, reserve police officers arrested a dozen oath-takers near the scene of the crime. Four were shot dead after they attacked the policemen in a car. During February 1953 a further six suspects were shot as they tried to escape from cars in what seemed an odd frenzy of rashness. Even more reckless was a Mau Mau suspect turned informer who had promised to lead a King's African Rifles patrol to a gang, but took his own life by throwing himself into a burning hut. Between the start of the Emergency and 20 April 1953, 430 arrested men had been shot dead as they had tried to escape. [12]

Beatings, torture, mutilation and the shooting of prisoners out of hand were everyday occurrences. A bitter opponent of Mau Mau, Carey Francis, a European headmaster, complained to the authorities that the police were to his certain knowledge 'involved in many acts of brutality to prisoners (sometimes amounting to deliberate and despicable torture) and of looting and destruction of private property'. These excesses, he went on, were so widespread 'as to be regarded as the normal policy of the Security Forces'. The police 'are feared and loathed, and never trusted, by the great bulk of Africans, not least by those who are well-disposed'.[13]

The scale of official repression was also without precedent in post-war British conflicts. Between the declaration of the Emergency and early November 1954, 756 rebels were hanged. Of these, 508 were executed for offences less than murder, including 290 for possessing arms or ammunition and an astonishing 45 for administering illegal oaths. By the end of 1954 over 900 rebels had been hanged, and by the time the Emergency had come to an end the number was over 1,000. The Public Works Department built a mobile gallows so that prisoners could be hanged in their home districts as an example to others. This was, by any reckoning, a judicial massacre of some moment: Mau Mau prisoners were at one time being hanged at the rate of fifty a month. The *Daily Telegraph*'s correspondent was later to recall that 'many prisoners received what were virtually drumhead trials' and were hanged after proceedings 'that made a mockery of British justice'.[14] The scale of the hangings certainly caused concern in London, where Churchill advised 'that care should be taken to avoid the simultaneous execution of any large numbers of persons'. He was worried that public opinion in Britain would be disturbed by 'anything resembling mass executions'.[15]

What has Kitson to say about the unprecedented ferocity of this repression? As far as he was concerned, the Security Forces 'had firmly fastened one of their hands behind their back with the cord of legal difficulties' and he complains of the gullibility of a liberal judiciary regularly freeing Mau Mau prisoners. Because of this, some

loyalist Africans – not Europeans, of course – took the law into their own hands. 'Looking back I am sure that this was wrong. Certainly this sort of conduct saved countless loyalist lives and shortened the Emergency. All the same it was wrong because the good name of Britain was being lost for the sake of a few thousand Africans and a few million pounds of the taxpayers' money.' And anyway, such excesses were 'very rare'. [16] It is difficult to know how to respond to this apparent condemnation of any excesses the Security Forces might have committed. Reprisals were very rare and yet they saved countless lives and actually shortened the Emergency, they were wrong because they damaged Britain's good name and all for the sake of a few thousand Africans! It seems certain that this ironic and deliberately ambiguous condemnation is, in fact, intended to serve as some kind of coded endorsement for those in the know. Clearly, Kitson's book must be seen as part of a remarkably successful cover-up for one of the most savage of British colonial wars, rewriting the history of the Mau Mau rebellion as an exotic, white man's adventure story.

After his successes in Kenya, Kitson was to go on to serve in Malaya against the communists, in Military Operations at the War Office where he helped organise SAS operations in Oman, and in Cyprus on peace-keeping duties. He wrote *Low Intensity Operations* while on a defence scholarship at University College, Oxford, and was then appointed to put his theories into practice as commander of the 39th Infantry Brigade in Ulster, the youngest brigadier in the Army. This was followed by command of the School of Infantry at Warminster, which gave him the opportunity to establish his ideas on counter-insurgency warfare as official doctrine. After this posting his career followed more conventional lines: he was given command of the 2nd Armoured Division, became Commandant of the Staff College at Camberley, and then Deputy and later Commander-in-Chief of UK Land Forces. He has since retired. Without doubt, Kitson is one of the most important and influential British soldiers of the post-war period, and his influence is still not yet ended.[17]

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Notes and documents

150 years of white domination in New Zealand

That New Zealand offers the world a model of exemplary race relations is a myth devoutly believed by most white New Zealanders. Successive NZ administrations have purveyed this myth widely in international circles and it accounts for the quite remarkable smugness with which various governments have been able to overlook the realities of the past – and present – racial situation in their country, while pressing stridently for stronger measures against South African apartheid.

The wide gap between myth and reality has been exposed increasingly in recent years; exposed, that is, to the Pakeha (whites) – it was no news to the Maori. A new generation of outspoken Maori activists and scholars has demolished the travesties of reality which pass for NZ history and dissected the nature of the racial and cultural clash which divides contemporary society.[1] Their work has been complemented by Pakeha who have documented the nature of white prejudice in NZ from earliest European contact, have re-examined the making and wording – and subsequent dishonouring – of the Treaty of Waitangi (whose 150th anniversary falls in 1990) and have analysed the current economic reality of NZ society.[2]

Recently, the violence towards, and rejection of, the Maori which lies at the base of the whole society was highlighted by the fatal shooting of a Maori intruder by a white New Zealander, who was investigating noises coming from a neighbour's property, and the decision of the police not to bring a manslaughter charge. After this killing, a white New Zealander wrote to the mass circulation *Listener* (21.10.89): 'I will never again be able to dismiss comparisons

between South African and New Zealand race relations.'

The Treaty of Waitangi

The British first began looking seriously at New Zealand in terms of colonisation in the early nineteenth century as part of capitalism's expansion into the Southwest Pacific. New Zealand was seen as the new frontier to the already established New South Wales colony in Australia and as a field for commerce and trade.

The land had, however, already been colonised some eight or nine centuries before in the southernmost sweep of Polynesian migrations over the whole of the southern Pacific. By 1840 the Maori, numbering some 200,000 - 250,000, were spread throughout Aotearoa (as they called the country) and, during about seventy years of contact with Europeans (whalers and early settlers), coastal Maori had shown remarkable adaptive ability in trading and business.[3]

Various private settlement schemes forced the hand of the British government, and the Colonial Office decided to seek a treaty with the Maori to gain both sovereignty and sole land purchasing rights for the Crown in New Zealand. Lord Normanby's instructions explicitly acknowledged that the title of the Maori people 'to the soil and to the sovereignty of New Zealand is indisputable, and has been solemnly recognised by the British Government'.[4] The resulting Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, was understood in very different ways by the Maori and European signatories, a situation brought about by the deliberate differences in key terms between the English and Maori versions.[5]

The English version gave the Crown what it wanted: sovereignty and land purchase rights, in return for protecting the Maori in possession of their lands, fisheries and properties and granting them the rights of British subjects. The Maori, in centuries-old possession of their country, and with the 2,000 settlers entirely dependent on their goodwill – and even on the food Maori agriculture produced – had no reason to sign such a Treaty. The Maori version they signed ceded governorship (*Kawanatanga*), not sovereignty, to the British and guaranteed the Maori full chieftainship (*Rangatiratanga* – in effect, sovereignty) over their lands, settlements and possessions. They gave the Crown the sole right to buy land they wished to sell.

In both English and international law the interpretation of such a legal contract is governed by the principle of *contra proferentem*: if a dispute arises, the understanding of the accepting party (in this case the Maori) overrides that of the side which drew up the contract. In reality, the last 150 years have seen Maori rights overridden in the European drive for possession and profit, while the Maori continuously insisted, by petitions to the Crown and passive and active resistance, that the Treaty guaranteed their sovereignty.

The theft of the land

British settlers came to New Zealand culturally blinkered by racial condescension and European concepts of land tenure and economic organisation. They wanted the land and justified every encroachment by labelling vast tracts of Maori land (used according to a different concept of land management) 'waste'; furthermore they claimed they not only made better use of it but actually enriched the Maori by giving a monetary value to land the Maori had done nothing to improve (though this land was used as an important source of foodstuffs such as fruits, ferns and wild birds). In depriving the Maori of their source of livelihood, the settlers were also seeking cheap labour to develop their new farms, as happened in the African colonies. The Crown, buying land at 1d an acre and selling it at £1, profited greatly.

Maori resistance to land sales led to the settler-contrived Land Wars of the 1860s, which ended in large-scale, punitive, confiscations of land under the NZ Settlements Act; these amounted to some 3 million acres, concentrated in the rich land of the Waikato. There followed a long series of Acts,[6] beginning with the 1862 Native Lands Act (aimed at individualising land ownership as a preliminary to sale and breaking what was termed the Maori's 'beastly communism'), through a further nine Acts, the last as recent as 1967, giving the government ever new powers to prise land from its native owners. In spite of the arrogant 'philanthropic' rhetoric in protective clauses about 'raising' the Maori to the level of white 'civilisation', the Acts had only one aim: 'To redeem the mistake made by the authors of the Treaty of Waitangi in declaring the Maori people to be the proprietors of the whole of New England.'[7] In this they certainly succeeded. Today, the Maori own less than 5 per cent of the land.

Throughout these years the Maori response to the European invasion of their country was vigorous and flexible. Their innovative military tactics and sophisticated trench and bunker systems had brought them close to winning the New Zealand Land Wars.[8] They rapidly adapted European technology and methods. During the 1850s, for example, Maori owned and controlled eighteen flour mills on the Waikato River alone, had over fifty trading ships in excess of fourteen tons registered in Auckland, contributed over half the country's customs revenue and produced most of the food for the early European settlements.[9]

The assault on a people

But with the continued twisting of the Treaty by the NZ government for Pakeha ends, the Maori were robbed of their economic and cultural base, their land, their language, their sovereignty. Ravaged,

too, by introduced diseases, their numbers fell to 40,000 by the late nineteenth century and the white community could rejoice – or, in a few cases, lament – that the Maori were, inevitably, a dying race: '. . . scarcely a subject of much regret. They are dying out in a quick easy way and are being supplanted by a superior race'. An opinion that is scarcely less brutal than the earlier reply of a settler who, on being asked how he would propose to 'civilise' the Maori, declared 'Shoot them to be sure! A musket ball for every New Zealander [i.e., Maori] is the only way of civilising their country.'[10] However, the rejoicing over the decline was premature. Maori numbers began increasing around the turn of the century (today, at over 400,000, they are nearly 13 per cent of the total population) and the new hope became that the Maori would, in effect, disappear through assimilation, a process regarded as possible because the Maori was judged to be at a higher stage of development than the darker races!

This new hope was similarly dashed. What emerged was a system of separate development, unofficial but as effective as that in South Africa. The Maori were excluded from real power by a European 'democratic' political system which can ignore minority voices (thus, for example, rendering the much vaunted Maori MPs politically powerless) and forced to exist within the framework of an economic system (capitalism) which totally negated their own communal system. They became – and remain – an oppressed people. The result shows in every socio-economic indicator. For example:

- The Maori infant mortality rate is twice that of non-Maori, as are Maori sickness rates. Their life expectancy is several years shorter.
- 62 per cent of Maori leave school unqualified, compared with 28 per cent of non-Maori; the head of Auckland Boys Grammar School ascribed this failure to 'laziness'.
- Maori unemployment rates are almost four times those of whites.[11]
- Drug and alcohol abuse, admissions to mental hospitals and rocketing suicide statistics among Maori by comparison with Pakeha indicate a people suffering extreme stress and alienation.
- Any Maori child is four times more likely than a white child to appear in court before they are 17; any Maori adult is six times more likely to be charged than a Pakeha, seven times more likely to be found guilty when before a judge, and when found guilty will receive a sentence twice as harsh.[12]

Changes in the 1980s

Two interacting factors have aggravated and exposed the realities of NZ society in the 1980s. One was the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal as a vehicle to address Maori grievances in relation to the Treaty. First passed in 1975 (but not made retrospective, which

severely limited its scope), the Treaty of Waitangi Bill was amended by the Labour government in 1984 so that the Waitangi Tribunal could hear claims dating back to 1840. Although the Maori have, since 1840, petitioned and agitated repeatedly for the honouring of their Treaty rights – to their land, fisheries, resources, self-determination – the establishment of the Tribunal provided a focus for claims which they immediately utilised. But while the Tribunal can interpret the Treaty in relation to claims brought before it, the government is not bound to accept its recommendations unless ruled on by the Court of Appeals.

The second cause of abrupt change in New Zealand was the introduction by the Labour government since 1984 of a ruthless monetarist economic policy. This has created new extremes of wealth and poverty and a powerful group of interlocking companies, concentrated in finance, property speculation and the service sector, which effectively control New Zealand.[13]

Already disproportionately represented amongst the poor, the Maori were hit hardest under this free market regime. They took the brunt of increasing unemployment, which often affected entire communities. High mortgage rates worsened the crisis in Maori housing and farming. Reduced postal and transport services isolated Maori rural communities and the cuts in other social services reduced their already inadequate access to, for example, health facilities.

While the government could callously disregard the impact of monetarism on vulnerable groups in society, it could not ignore another problem it had created for itself. Its commitment to honouring the Treaty was quite incompatible with economic restructuring and unrestrained resource exploitation, for these required privatisation of government commercial operations and fisheries – precisely those Crown possessions which the Maori were claiming under the Treaty through the Waitangi Tribunal.

In the case of fisheries, the Treaty guarantees the Maori continued ownership. But the restructuring of the fishing industry in 1986 established a quota management system which created private property rights in fish species, allowing quotas to be sold or leased for profit. The Muriwhenua tribes' successful challenge over this system, which the government tried to ignore, led to the High Court ordering the Crown to negotiate an agreement with the Maori. The media and the fishing industry presented this dispute to the public as a case of the Maori trying to rob 'ordinary' (i.e., white) New Zealanders of their fisheries. In fact, 70 per cent of 'the people's fisheries' had already been given to a handful of transnational corporations or leased to foreign fishing interests. And these interests, responsible for the reckless overfishing the quota management system was supposed to control, were the same operators who had been allocated most of the quotas.

The clash was even stronger in the case of the privatisation or corporatisation of government enterprises such as steel, coal, forests or the telephone system, which involved large tracts of land. The Maori Council took the government to court and won a decision requiring all Crown land titles being sold to carry a caveat that the land would revert to the government in the event of a successful claim before the Waitangi Tribunal. Hailed as a landmark victory, the decision did not, however, give any guarantee that the land would ever revert to Maori ownership. The immediate impact was a spate of claims and counter-claims before a vastly understaffed and underfunded Tribunal, which the government 'solved' not by expanding the Tribunal but by a 'fast-track' negotiation system working within the government's own economic framework.

De-regulation was applied equally in areas of social policy. For example, the 1988 Picot report on education, 'Administering for excellence', envisaged education as a commodity bought and sold by individual school committees; it completely ignored Maori concerns. The government's adoption of it will further squeeze Maori children from succeeding in the white-controlled education system (and allow them no chance of an education relevant in Maori terms). By contrast, the government shelved the 1988 Royal Commission on Social Policy's report, which held that the time was ripe to 'make the Treaty part of the New Zealand constitution so that its values and principles are embedded in New Zealand society.'[14]

Cultural imperialism

Though the myth of harmonious race relations in New Zealand has been dented, most white New Zealanders still believe the Maori are treated as equals (after all, there are Maori MPs, professionals, even a Maori Governor-General) and have only themselves to blame if they don't make it in what is seen as a 'neutral' system. This complacency is reinforced by an historical amnesia which either forgets past exploitation or considers that past as best forgotten: 'We're all New Zealanders now.' That the effects of past injustice are still very much present not only in the Maori's position but that these form the basis of Pakeha affluence is ignored.

Over the last decade or so a small number of Pakeha have re-examined NZ colonial history and recognised the pervasiveness of the institutional racism. That such racism needs to be tackled cannot be doubted. Effective, if unofficial, discrimination operates in housing, employment, indeed in every aspect of life except tourism and entertainment, where a characterless white society seeks to appropriate, commercialise and profit from another people's culture, tearing bits of it out of context, fragmenting a cultural reality and thereby destroying it. Eliminating institutional racism would not,

however, do more than allow the Maori to be equals in a white society.

The issue in New Zealand is, in fact, not merely racism but the clash of two totally opposed cultures. The nineteenth century settlers (as in other colonial situations) were imbued with the certainty that they brought civilisation to a barbarous native race. Blind to the realities of their own society, the settlers regarded the Maori as dirty, childish, improvident and, perhaps worst of all, lazy. As one settler wrote home in 1851, the Maori 'does not feel that he *ought* to go on till his fair day's work is done . . . The *idea* of duty is wanting with the savage . . . '[15]

Today, the Pakeha still find it almost impossible to conceptualise the cultural, as opposed to the racial, division of New Zealand. They cannot *see* Maori culture because they cannot see that they themselves have a culture. Culture, for white people, as Donna Awatere caustically observes, is about 'art galleries, opera, ballet and not picking your nose. It's not about land alienation, cultural imperialism, trade unions, agriculture, voting, the alphabet, and sewage systems based on water.'[16]

From the first impact of European settlement, two irreconcilable cultures came into conflict. The European was individualistic and market-oriented, obsessed with the present, with material accumulation and private property, with the idea of progress (defined as technological achievement): the values of capitalism. By contrast, Maori culture is communal, non-materialistic, spiritual, rooted in the land and involves reciprocal obligations over time. For Pakeha, the violence inherent in the idea of private property and wealth – pushed to a new extreme in the age of Milton Friedman – is disguised under the idea of freedom and by the extreme detachment of decision makers (and consumers) from the results of their actions, whether these involve Maori alienation in New Zealand, the millions of children dying of starvation throughout the Third World, or the torture and elimination of those who resist this murderous economic system in Guatemala, El Salvador or numerous other countries.

Bishop Manuhuia Bennett's endorsement of Donna Awatere's brilliant and angry re-articulation of the Maori demand for sovereignty served notice to white New Zealand that 'honouring the Treaty' means the return not only of Maori land but also of Maori sovereignty and that this is mainstream, not just 'radical', Maori thinking. Quite simply, Maori people cannot exist, *as Maori*, within a western capitalist culture. It remains for the Pakeha to recognise that their own lives and society are deformed by the same capitalism against which the Maori have fought for 150 years.

Raumati South, NZ ANNE BUCHANAN

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UK commentary

Why beggars must be choosers

The '80s media beatification of Bob Geldof, the pop-singer and initiator of mass media charity, has led others converted by his evangelism to ask (perhaps out of vanity, perhaps out of unconscious cultural arrogance), how can we top Live Aid? How can we, the opinion makers, participate in the social conscience movement which has emerged latterly in christian-consumerist European culture, and at the same time demonstrate the vitality of public (spirited) TV? Indeed, this is the type of self-aggrandising, philanthropic question which characterises global capitalist culture – the new Japanese empire as well as Europe and its diaspora (notably in the Americas and Australia). And the answer? For the '90s? The promotion of yet another massive international media event.

In May, 'One World 1990' will hit a global audience of more than 500 million. For one week from the 20th to the 26th, audiences will be bombarded with worldwide media 'events', to be reinforced by locally-made programmes on the same theme. The focus will be on the environmental crises of our planet and their relation to overconsumption in the rich countries and underdevelopment in the poor countries of our world system. As the publicity material puts it, in tones of

fashionable ecological doom:

> For a long time the developed nations of the North have perceived the problems of the South in terms of money and aid.
>
> But now a new dimension has been added – the approaching and alarming environmental crisis. It is the climax of a chain of peculiarly human influence, a species so powerful, so successful, that it can even disturb the Earth's equilibrium. Climatic change, deforestation, desertification, ozone erosion, and pollution become famine, starvation, disease, mass migration and homelessness on an unprecedented scale.

The intention of the 'One World 1990' initiative, then, is to focus on environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

The catch phrase of 'One World 1990' is 'Think global, act local'. It will link, as never before, the electronic media with voluntary and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like 'Friends of the Earth', 'Christian Aid', 'The World Bank'(!), 'Save the Children'. They, it is hoped, will follow up the programmes with 'local, national and international events'. 'One World 1990' will give access to participation and inputs from the poor countries of the South.

The practical outcome anticipated is that people will not merely give money but join in the activities of the NGOs. And that somehow this joining or raised consciousness might bend the ears of our governments and so influence global reform.

Several big media events have been planned, designed to capture the attention and the imagination of TV viewers worldwide. To open, 'top broadcasters' from all over will present a brief summary of the world's environmental problems – from 'climatic change and pollution to Third World debt, and mass migration' – all in the space of around fifteen to twenty minutes. There will be a satellite chat and question-time link-up involving the Soviet and US top men, Gorbachev and Bush, joined by Peres de Cuellar, the top man of the UN Assembly. There will be a television conference, lasting some eight hours, of development and environment bureaucrats and analysts, which is also intended as an educational resource for schools and colleges throughout Europe. There will be a twelve hour 'well constructed and truly international' pop concert for global transmission. And there will be a major TV drama, highlighting the plight of 'environmental refugees'.

It seems certain that this massive event will make a splash, at least for a while, particularly in Europe. Public broadcasting TV in West Germany, Britain, Norway, Austria, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain will be joined by other national TV participants before May 1990.

At the centre of this media-blitz is the drama, designed to engage

audiences through their imagination, which, in its outcome, will surely be disastrous to race relations and denigrating of the Third World.

Its working title is 'The March on Europe' – a metaphor which is in itself threatening. The basic story line – as befits a global drama – is apocalyptic. After a series of major droughts in Africa, the continent, no less, is dying. There are already one million illegal African immigrants in Italy alone. A charismatic and, most importantly, non-violent leader, Isa El Mahdi, emerges from one of the refugee camps with a simple message: 'We are poor because you [the West] are rich.' El Mahdi's plan is simple – to walk with whoever will follow to the shores and cities of Europe, and shame it into action with the threat of 'watch us die in your streets'. Tormented by hunger and thirst, he leads an ever increasing throng of desperate North African refugees with Arab names to the shores of the Mediterranean and crosses over to Europe. And Europe replies with riot shields and helicopter gunships.

Throughout the drama the utter hopelessness of Africa is stressed; it is the victim of Acts of God so elemental as to be not amenable to the policies of man. El Mahdi himself is fatalistic in his acceptance of suffering; he is compared to Gandhi, but his is no Gandhian confrontation with the citadels of power, or Gandhian exploration of what the very poorest can do, out of their own resources, to reshape their lives. Nor are the issues raised for the audience even seen through his eyes. Instead, our perceptions and direct involvement are channelled through the individual moral and political dilemmas of a liberal woman development official – Irish, so she, too, 'knows' colonisation. Thus, at every level, the starving remain 'out there' – almost a different species in the unimaginable conditions of their lives.

And all the drama will do through this portrayal of passive suffering is to reinforce among more liberal-minded viewers the image of Africa and Africans as hopeless, eternal victims. Moreover, coming as it does in the context of the ever increasing exclusion and expulsion of asylum-seekers from Europe's borders, it can only serve to increase hostility towards them. The 'Fortress Europe' of 1992 is rapidly being built; those countless would-be-besiegers at its borders have to be kept out at all costs; 'The March on Europe' portrays them as a real threat, and in doing so simply stokes up the fires of racial xenophobia.

In spite of all the fine language of these public TV well-meaners (and because of their wistful politics), the message will be one in which the existing popular culture of self-interest will feel threatened by another imaginary culture of common interest. The paranoia of the fat-cat society will be stirred by the idea of eyes and bellies that crave to wrest the food out of our European mouths. And violent

resentment will be the more likely response to the suggestion that Europe owes some kind of hospitable welcome to these pathetic Muslim African invaders.

Unless, that is, the drama and other programme events show the political economy rather than the mere ecology of the global environmental crises. And unless they expose the business rather than merely the bureaucracy that is responsible for the reproduction of the global environmental and development quandary. And unless the audiences are educated to a sophisticated knowledge of the imperialism that must be fundamentally challenged if the globe is to be turned back from its material excesses, rather than foisted with the belief that changed personal attitudes are the key to stopping the wasteful excesses of the first world and the pillage of the Third. The 'One World' focus would have to direct audiences to explore solutions through a sense of world empire(s) rather than by appeals to some empire of the senses.

Europe's new liberals are but one step behind Europe's new radicals who stand on very infirm and slippery ground of late. Sivanandan, almost prophetically, catches our greatest fears over the flaws of 'One World 1990'.

> With 'the return of the subjective' has also gone the notion of imperialism out of the new marxist reckoning – the ravaging of the Third World, the exploitation of its peoples, the theft of its resources, ecological devastation. The Third World is no longer out there as an object of struggle; it is here, in the minds of people, as an anodyne to consumption, in the personal politics of the subject – an object of western humanism, the occasion for individual aid, a site for pop culture and pop politics.

And, more pointedly, about the effectiveness of Band Aid, Live Aid, Sport Aid – and now 'One World' – phenomena:

> all that it shifted was the focus of responsibility for the impoverishment of the Third World from western governments to individuals and obscured the workings of multinational corporations and their agents, the IMF and the World Bank. Worse, it made people in the West feel that famine and hunger were endemic to the Third World, to Africa in particular (the dark side of the affluent psyche), and what they gave was as of their bounty, not as some small recompense for what was being taken from the poor of the Third World. And, in the language of the new marxists (more or less), a discourse on western imperialism was transmogrified into a discourse on western humanism.[1]

The 'One World 1990' project must be diverted from (a) becoming a fillip to fascists, who already use the Black and Third World

presence to stir attacks by desperate natives against the 'aliens'; (b) misrepresenting the true predicament and demands of Third World masses who have a different and more historic hunger to that of a mere craving for what the West has on its tables, and (c) letting the really big fish off the hook – those who make money over our dead bodies, those brokers who are already dealing in devastated futures.

It is a matter for grave concern that an event which purports to be concerned with undoing and exposing the causes of material scarcity and crises should risk accelerating further assaults on the already assaulted and covering the tracks of the fat cats.

London BILL BRANCHE

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Book reviews

Crossroads: Congress, The Reagan Administration and Central America

By CYNTHIA ARNSON (New York, Pantheon, 1989). 275pp. $13.95.

The spirit of the times, Goethe wrote, is the spirit of the bourgeoisie as it is reflected in contemporary culture. Thanks to the eight years of illusionism under the Great Prevaricator, absurdities have become accepted as truisms. By 1981, Jean Kirkpatrick, a leading anti-communist theologian, called Central America 'the most important place in the world'. The cheerleading media began to cover the region accordingly, and brought into the spotlight characters of dubious value.

In an era of crass individualism, cowardice and corruption, however, Central American revolutionaries provided an impetus for Americans and Europeans to give political and religious meaning to their own lives. In what historians of the Reagan era may label the banal years, those activists have written a heroic page.

Congress, on the other hand, failed to respond with integrity to the Reagan challenge to convert Central America into an East-West arena of conflict. True to their Cold War character, the legislators failed to rise to the occasion: instead, they whined at the President and ultimately funded projects that rank high on the all-time irresponsibility list.

Originally a PhD dissertation, *Crossroads* traces the course of Reagan's policies from his early uncompromising rightism, to his speech writers' discovery of democracy and human rights; from the first to the second Reagan presidency – when the Contras got their aid renewed and the Salvadoran thugs got their democratic facelift with US-staged elections.

The book ends as the Iran-Contra mess destroyed a consensus based on myths, threats and lies. The focus of the study is the

relationship of Congress to the imperial presidency. For a clear and careful annotated chronology of events and issues, as well as a guide to the leading legislative actors, *Crossroads* offers a definitive record.

On the narrative and factual level, the book is a veritable mine of information, a catalogue of issue classification. Congress clutched at its dwindling prerogatives while Reagan and his ideological gang deceived Members, who, in turn, behaved as if they were dealing with gentlemen, and that if only knaves like CIA Chief Casey and NSC staffer North hadn't hustled them, Contra aid might not have happened.

The book chronicles the procedural war between the legislature and executive, but does not analyse Congress's self-imposed Cold War limitations. The House and Senate leadership, so arrogant in its internal power plays, did not flex muscle over law breaking, but accepted as an axiom the US imperial mandate to play the rogue elephant stomping through the peoples and resources of Central America.

Without a substantive agenda, as *Crossroads* makes clear, Members were limited to obstacle building or damage limitation, restricting, but not cutting off, funds to the Contras and putting human rights provisions on aid to the Salvadoran military. Because they dared not confront the popular President, nor ridicule his hysterical anti-communism, they reduced themselves to carping on procedural grounds.

Arnson maintains that Congress reflected the public's lack of consensus. In lieu of clarity among the citizenry, Congress sidetracks the issues – its responsibility – and blusters about its perquisites. Ironically, while the book recounts the details of the battles as if they were political prize fights, it also reveals without saying so that Congress has lost its meaning. The national security elite appeared to understand that checks and balances on power do not serve imperial needs efficiently. So, they practised the politics of circumvention, as seen most clearly in the shenanigans of CIA Chief Casey and his protege, Colonel Oliver North.

The message derived from this book is that 'Central America' dramatised the end of politics. Well-selected quotes from Members show the triteness of political discourse. 'It was a real thrill to meet him', admits a Kentucky Democrat who switched his vote on Contra aid because Reagan met with him for a few minutes. 'He's the kind of guy [Reagan] you just want to help', said a shifting Republican. Their votes helped cause thousands of deaths and incalculable consequences, but few in either House even thought in those terms.

The book implies that neither Congress nor the Administration spent time or thought about what US national interests are in Central America. The 1989 invasion of Panama, like the knee-jerk anti-

revolutionary policies in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala reflect archaic Cold War thought, which still reigns in all branches of government.

Crossroads doesn't face directly the issues it raises. While the text demonstrates that Central America was the backdrop for a political farce played out among mediocre politicians and bureaucrats, the author does not directly dispute the anchoring precepts of the game: that democracy and human rights are genuine US goals in the region. She does not question the gospel on Capitol Hill that former Salvadoran President Duarte was a real democrat, rather than a creation of Administration media spinners.

'The limits on US power that Americans found so troubling during the Carter years', Arnson concludes, 'daunted U.S. policy makers in Central America.' True, but why? For the answer to this question, the reader must look elsewhere. 'Congress and the executive', she writes, 'failed to agree on a common sense of purpose.' Yes, but neither had a meaningful agenda; both were stuck on image and public relations politics. The insecure Congress had little sense of national goals. And Reagan pleased his right wing, claimed toughness and toasted his own patriotism, while bankrupting the economy and crushing the poor at home and abroad.

Referring to Reagan's passing the mantle to Bush, Arnson writes: 'It could be said that U.S. policy had reached a new crossroad, but this time with fewer paths to choose from and the available ones more fraught with peril than before. Transforming military conflicts into political ones will stand as the greatest challenge of future U.S. administrations. Hopefully, the United States will possess sufficient wisdom to acknowledge that others – traditional friends and enemies alike – might be helpful in that task.'

From whence will this wisdom develop? *Crossroads*' deeper message must be derived, since the author's cautious language shies away from tough conclusions. Although clearly appalled by the death and destruction caused by Reagan's policies, she remains within the respectable discourse of academic writing – a style that is as out-of-synch as the policies themselves with the drama and violence of the subject.

Washington DC SAUL LANDAU

Machines as the Measure of Men: science, technology, and ideologies of Western dominance

By MICHAEL ADAS (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989). 430pp.

Despite its promising title, Adas's book is something of a disappointment. Where one might have hoped for an analysis that would have meshed together Europe's history of industrial and technological dominance with imperial expansion and self-serving ideologies of cultural superiority, there are some 400 pages covering the judgments and impressions of what seems like every European visitor to Asia, Africa, China, etc., from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Not surprisingly, we glean that disparaging attitudes to other cultures and civilisations intensified as the centuries wore on; that China and India were both deemed to have made great contributions to human civilisation in former eras, but, by the nineteenth century, were irredeemably past it, and that Africa was virtually a write off from the start.

Adas's concern, he says, is with the 'attitudes toward non-Western peoples and cultures which were held by literate members of the upper and middle classes of Western European societies and the ways in which these attitudes shaped ideologies of Western dominance and informed colonial policy'. But while we are given the former in abundance, there is very little of the latter – apart from some discussion of education policy, particularly in regard to India. This focuses on how much emphasis was to be placed on the teaching of the English language and western bodies of knowledge, and how much on indigenous languages and bodies of knowledge. As Adas does not, however, relate this discussion to anything else that was going on in India at the time – whether the dispossession and rack-renting of the peasantry, the machinations of the East India company, the destruction of nascent local industries, or the rebellions of which 1857 was the greatest – it is hard to know what to make of it. Except that all those colonial officials involved seemed very much concerned.

Indeed, the cumulative effect of reading so many thought-out, well-expressed and at least partially-informed accounts is to be drawn, almost insensibly, into the value systems of their authors. When one reads for the nth time that so and so judged China to have made massive contributions to the sum of human knowledge historically, but its medical practices weren't up to much, it comes as something of a shock to realise that Chinese physicians are found wanting for not practising the barbarities of blood-letting.

Adas evidently believes that racism (which he restricts to the 'belief that humankind can be divided into sub-groups that differ innately and fundamentally in physical and mental attributes') has been

overplayed as a factor in Europe's relations with non-Western peoples. Such theories, he argues, were late developing, of limited circulation and hotly contested. Racism, he claims, was less important than the sense of superiority engendered among Europeans by the development of science and technology. He is careful, however, to limit his argument to the 'level of intellectual exchange as opposed to popular sentiment'. He abstracts it also from 'social interaction', any consideration of the practice of racial discrimination or of the uses to which those colonies and their peoples were put. Thus everything material is taken out of the equation, and the fact that even 'intellectuals', let alone colonial governments, policy-makers and officials, do not necessarily act according to the dictates of 'intellectual discourse' is ignored. He acknowledges that race theories grew in significance at the height of imperial expansion, yet overlooks the stratum of crude, white-over-black superiority laid down over centuries of slave trading, slave holding and conquest from which such theories erupted.

Adas's attempts to combat the 'racist reductionism' he discerns in much colonial historiography lead, in fact, to a far more insidious reductionism, one which reads almost like an apologia for that history:

> Though the vast majority of Europeans may indeed have considered themselves superior to Asians or Africans, significant numbers did not see or express this superiority in racist terms. For many of these the conviction that they possessed vastly better tools and weapons and attitudes towards work and discipline or that they knew better how to treat women and to write legal codes, was sufficient to justify European conquest, commercial expansion and efforts to educate and uplift the 'benighted' peoples of the Third World.

Institute of Race Relations HAZEL WATERS

Political Memoirs of an Unrepentant Communist

By N. SANMUGATHASAN (Colombo, Lake House, 1989). 300pp. Rs 100.

The contributions of Sanmugathasan to the revolutionary movement in Sri Lanka may be a subject of controversy among political historians, marxist intellectuals and left organisations, but there cannot be any dispute about his leading role in creating the Maoist movement in Sri Lanka. Sanmugathasan became a communist in 1939 when he was still an undergraduate. He published his political

memoirs in 1989 at the age of 70, after completing fifty years of active life as a communist revolutionary. To give fifty years of active life unreservedly to the cause one believes in is, in itself, an extraordinary human sacrifice. It is, however, not my purpose here to evaluate Sanmugathasan (Shan, as he is known to all) as an individual. Shan himself may object to such an assessment, for in his life the political and the personal have merged almost imperceptibly. So when one recalls the ups and downs, the successes and failures of Shan in the last fifty years, one is actually reviewing the career of the political organisation he led and the country's left movement in general.

Shan joined the Ceylon Communist Party as a full-timer in July 1943, two weeks after its founding and as soon as he sat the final examination at the university. The party paid him a monthly allowance of sixty rupees. The decision to become a full-timer of the CP disappointed his parents who, with their humble means, managed to give him a university education with the dream of seeing him as a colonial civil servant. Concerned about her son's future security, Shan's mother asked him what he would do in his old age. The young communist replied, 'By then we would have had socialism'.

But history did not move along the path appointed by the CP or any other revolutionary party in Sri Lanka. Instead, the past fifty years saw the rise and fall and the fragmentation and disintegration of the socialist movement. The early radicals who set out, with great zeal, to change history, became its prisoners within two decades. They were enticed by the deceptive, but seductive, short cuts history appeared to offer in the form of Sinhala nationalism and sharing of power in parliament via cabinet portfolios. Most of the pioneers of the left movement steered their parties on to the road of capitulationism through a series of class compromises. Shan stood out against the trend and, when the Moscow-Peking split occurred, he left the CP with a handful of comrades to found the ('Maoist') Communist Party of Ceylon (CPC).

The *Memoirs* are by no means a series of anecdotes; they are pieces of history as experienced and watched by the CPC (and the CCP before that) and reconstructed by its leader. Even where the author looks at events and personalities outside the Maoist movement (for instance, his evaluation of the late Mr Bandaranaike), his approach is firmly based on the party line. The 'facts' of the events and the author's ideological interpretation form an amalgam: the political line runs right through the book like a red thread.

Of the many struggles led by the CPC and recounted in the *Memoirs*, two are most remarkable from a politico-historical perspective: the struggle against casteism in Jaffna and the mobilisation of the plantation workers by the Red Flag Union in the 1966-70 period. In both these struggles the CPC championed the causes of two of Sri

Lanka's most deprived and depressed communities. Only a leadership which cared for social justice and had no thought of courting popular acclaim or votes could have dared to launch such struggles. That the movement against untouchability in particular should have been led by a 'high-caste' Tamil and taken right into the heartland of vellala Tamil society was itself a brave act. That it achieved considerable success in getting temples and some other public places open to the depressed castes attests to the shrewdness of the leadership. But the most significant achievement of all was the confidence and militancy it instilled in the Untouchables – a people who had for centuries been oppressed in the most shameful and barbaric ways by Hindu society.

Similarly, the Red Flag Union gave the thousands of disenfranchised plantation workers who were its members a sense of belonging and a spirit of militancy, at a time when the other left parties had turned their backs on them because they no longer had the vote.

However, it is also remarkable that these two great phenomena were short lived and the CPC has been conspicuously absent in the momentous liberation struggle that followed in the North and East. Untouchability has not disappeared from Tamil society, but the struggle against the oppression of the Tamil people as a whole by the self-proclaimed Sinhala Buddhist state has subsumed and subverted the struggle against casteism. While this signals something about the politics of the dominant Tamil liberation organisations, it also raises a serious question about the politics of the CPC. Why has the CPC not been able to play an active role in the Tamil liberation struggle?

This question takes us to the heart of the self-imposed theoretical dilemma of many marxist revolutionaries in Sri Lanka: the relation between class and nationalism. Having condemned and rejected the pro-Sinhala chauvinism of the major 'marxist' parties (the LSSP and CP), the CPC sought to rise above both Tamil and Sinhala nationalisms by turning to theoretical abstractions and overlooking the living revolutionary potential of the Tamil liberation struggle. And by so defining themselves out of the Tamil liberation struggle, the CPC and many individual Tamil marxists served to contribute to the strengthening of chauvinist tendencies within the Tamil struggle itself. Today, Tamil nationalism has taken a militant ideological form that sometimes looks like a mirror image of Sinhala chauvinism. Or, as Sivanandan puts it, 'the uneasy mating of bourgeois historicism with historical materialism continues to plague the theory and practice of Tamil nationalism even today.'[1]

In the *Memoirs* Sanmugathasan does, nonetheless, defend the Tamil people's right to nationhood while providing at the same time an insightful critique of the Tamil liberation struggle. Of the Tamil militants, he writes:

> They also failed to follow tactics of people's war, as enunciated by Mao Tse Tung, which was the only tactics which would have gained them success in a complex war against superior forces. Almost all the militant organisations were guilty of anti-people activities like robbery, extortion, assault, intimidation and murder but their worst crime was the killing of innocent Sinhalese and Tamils. At the same time they refused to arm the people and draw them into the fight against the enemy.

Very valid points indeed, but more important is that the CPC itself had failed to apply the Maoist theory to the concrete conditions of the Tamil struggle. And there, at least, there must be cause for repentance in this 'unrepentant communist'.

Even so, *Political Memoirs of an Unrepentant Communist* is an authoritative work by a most respected marxist intellectual and trade unionist in Sri Lanka. Sanmugathasan has been the political mentor for generations of marxist intellectuals throughout the country. In the 1960s, I was among those who flocked to his political classes at Peradeniya University and his union's offices in Colombo and discovered him to be one of the great dialecticians of our time. The *Memoirs*, like his lectures, is clear and enjoyable, but above all it is an outstanding historical document of and from an intrepid marxist – of whom there are scarcely any left in our country today.

Oslo N. SHANMUGARATNAM

Reference

1 A. Sivanandan, 'Sri Lanka: racism and the politics of underdevelopment', *Race & Class* (Summer 1984).

A Political Economy of the African Crisis

By BADE ONIMODE (London, Zed Books, 1988). 334pp. £9.95.

There has been a deluge of well-researched commentary on the various dimensions of the contemporary African situation. Yet neither bourgeois social science nor marxist dialectics have fully comprehended the overall projections of the crisis. Ibadan professor of economics Bade Onimode's text is an addendum to the catalogue of available – though inadequate – literature on the subject.

The author admits from the outset that the 'African crisis reflects itself in the glaring sectoral disparities of societal set-ups, rural – urban dichotomy, and crime'. The grotesque consequence of this is that class formations in post-colonial Africa grow rigid, while the emergent bourgeoisie continues protecting the cluster of upstarts masquerading

as African leaders (like Mobutu and the 'mandarin millionaires') and pauperising the multitude of destitute Africans, conditioning them into open starvation, large-scale unemployment and moral decay.

Onimode's straight-forward account of the crisis debunks the 'vicious circle-of-poverty' theorists as merely playing the imperialists' game. Their assertion that 'Africa is poor because she is poor', is, to him, erroneous and very misleading. On the contrary, Africa is poor because she is rich: a paradox which he believes owes its explanation to the centuries of European exploitation of Africa's mineral, agricultural and human resources for the benefit of the incursors. Consequently, the continent balances on a tightrope of external dependence, ever greater inequality in distribution, multinational pillage (with the support of local agents), ethno-religious upheavals, rising crime and cultural degradation.

When they arrived on the scene, the colonialists effectively banned local manufacturing, stifling the existing pre-colonial technological formation and also preserving raw materials and markets for Europe. This forced Africa into a situation of peripheral capitalism, aid-dependent and always at the beck and call of the West for its periodic (aid) fix. In the process, pre-capitalist communal set-ups were jeopardised. The failure also to absorb these displaced indigenous craftspeople into new industries, as happened in Europe during the Industrial Revolution, explains, to a very large extent, Africa's continued technological backwardness.

Also cogent is the author's exposé of the dominant role played by multinational corporations and international agencies in the underdevelopment of the African continent. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Finance Corporation, the International Development Association, the International Monetary Fund and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, for example, are seen primarily as agents of a new imperialism, aimed at elaborating 'a new international division of labour, a synthesis of monopoly capitalism'. Their operations, adds Onimode, are considerably facilitated by the collusion between them and the local bureaucratic bourgeoisie – themselves intermediaries for imperialism.

Onimode offers no apology for his dislike of the 'refined' or Africanised varieties of socialism that proliferate on the continent in the present search for the ideological quintessence of the African struggle. Experiments in Guinea under Sekou Touré, Nkrumah's Ghana, Tanzania, Congo Brazzaville, Egypt under Nasser, Kaunda's Zambia and Senegal are perceived as 'old socialist experiments', combining 'bourgeois philosophy based on subjective or mechanistic materialism . . . with a strong religious bias', accepting the institution of private property but insisting on social justice with it. The contradiction lies in the 'unscientific and untenable attempt to graft

the idealist values of a pre-capitalist communal African social formation with egalitarian distribution of wealth, on an eminently neo-colonial capitalist social reality in contemporary Africa, with yawning inequalities in the ownership of property'. The author admits also his disgust with the obscurantist mystifications associated with 'African or Arab socialism' and the like. As far as he is concerned, 'these were never genuinely socialist'. Rather, they were different mixtures of 'bureaucratic state capitalism with large doses of welfare statism'.

His roll call of new socialist experiments, on the other hand, features Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Ghana under Rawlings. This is quite a mixed bag and Rawlings' Ghana, in particular, would seem to be going the way of the IMF.* But it is the Ethiopian 'model' that seems to be closest to the author's heart. 'The gains of the Ethiopian Revolution', he maintains, 'have been truly immense against the background of the abject poverty imposed on the country by years of US-supported feudal fascism' – adding that 'the Revolution has firmly established mass revolutionary consciousness complete with a revolutionary mass party, an ideological school and an ideological journal'. This may, in principle, not be far from the truth. But, in fact, the Ethiopian experience, with its doctrinaire Marxist-Leninist ideology, has seen growing bureaucratisation, denial of freedom and mass poverty – a situation worsened by natural disasters like famine and drought, which, in turn, have been slowly manipulated by the superstructure for political advantage. Today, the bulk of the Ethiopian peasantry are still submerged in economic anarchy and political repression. Stagnation and decline now hover around the Ethiopian revolution, invalidating Professor Onimode's thesis that 'the economy has been fully reorganised under central planning, with socialist relations of production and an agrarian sector under state and corporate farms'. The inhuman repatriation of drought-affected villagers to 'productive settlements' has registered a huge mortality rate. Even the aid from relief agencies is constantly under threat, and the civil war with Tigray and Eritrea calls national and human rights into question. Even Mengistu's model, the Soviet Union, is undergoing a new phase of openness and democracy (*perestroika* and *glasnost*), which is why the Soviets asked their comrade to 'open up' or face 'punishment'.

Thus, while *A Political Economy of the African Crisis* is invaluable in its analysis of the African problematic, its shortcomings are rapidly exposed when it advances the case for full-blown scientific socialism to be implemented under the guidance of a vanguard Marxist-Leninist ideology.

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* See Yao Graham, 'Ghana: the IMF's African success story?', *Race & Class* (Vol. XXIX, No. 3, Winter 1988).

In the first place, his prescription that 'workers' control of enterprises plus nationalisation equals the socialisation of the means of production, with workers armed to defend these enterprises and trained to manage them effectively by themselves', has remained mere theoretical balderdash! Scientific socialism has never offered workers full control of enterprises. Instead, class contradictions, bureaucratic inefficiency and the tendency towards 'statism' become the hallmarks of the 'new solution'. In the special case of Africa, perverse illiteracy, acquisitive agressiveness, the primacy of money and institutionalised corruption all contribute to make imported ideological paradigms almost unworkable in their entirety, in the light of *real politik*. The author should have advocated the adaptation, and not wholesale adoption, of scientific socialism, paying respect to the specific conditions of the nations involved, their economic self-sufficiency, political and revolutionary consciousness, etc.

One would also want to ask what the author means by 'nationalisation'. If it means the 'state' appropriation of multinational enterprises and neo-colonial transnational corporations, then there is the risk of the emergence of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie with sharp class commitment, diametrically opposed to the interests of the broad mass of peasantry and working class.

In spite of its shortcomings, however, *A Political Economy of the African Crisis* provides a clear and coherent analysis of the African problematic. Notwithstanding Onimode's marxist orthodoxy (probably a product of ideological infatuation), the author should be commended for an excellent piece of work which is obviously the result of painstaking research. It is, by far, the most useful book in this area to have been produced by an African economist.

Freetown, Sierra Leone LANSANA FOFANA

Out of His Skin: the John Barnes phenomenon

By DAVE HILL (London, Faber & Faber, 1989). 160pp. £4.99 pb, £10.99 hb.

Although this book chronicles the rise of John Barnes as a Black soccer superstar, it is fundamentally about the conflicts facing Black people in competitive sport and, particularly, the overt and covert forms of racism which exist in British football.

Race and sport have always been an emotive combination for the projection of the racial stereotype. For instance, Blacks, it is alleged, are incapable of becoming top-notch swimmers because of 'a heavy bone structure', yet they are also alleged to possess 'natural athleticism'

because of their 'body structure'. Such mythology continues to be part of accepted wisdom in sporting circles. Black success in sport has been regarded by some as a way of breaking down racial stereotyping, building racial harmony and providing a route to success in western society. On the other hand, it is also seen as a narrow route to acclamation which, in any event, is only available for the few top competitors, whereas the ruling and governing bodies and the sports administrations remain predominantly white. Sport has also provided a platform for successful Black competitors to express opposition to racism.

When Jesse Owens won three gold medals at the Berlin Olympics in 1936 there was no doubting his supreme athleticism. However, even this unique sporting achievement failed to win acclaim in the eyes of the host nation as Adolph Hitler left the stadium thoroughly humiliated at having to witness a Black person triumph over his supposed superiors of the white race. Tommy Smith and John Carlos used the medal ceremony at the Rome Olympics to raise their black-gloved right hands in Black power salutations which led to their 'disgrace'.

These issues are thrown into sharp focus in Britain as Black people become successful and prominent in many sports. Their dominance is in athletics, boxing, football and cricket. As in so many walks of life, it is not so much an individual's talent as conforming to type that will guarantee success. There is the notion that racism can be overcome by pretending that it does not exist and by exuding charm to match the expectations of a public that expects Black people to be able to laugh at themselves. The converse of this is 'having a chip on your shoulder'.

In all of the sporting activities at which Black people now compete at national and international level in Britain, they have had to overcome more obstacles than their white counterparts, who have not had to experience the effects of racism. Many Black professional boxers have fallen out with managers and promoters because they claim they are being ripped-off while others in the same stable have been given preferential treatment. John Conteh was a Liverpool-born lad who went on to win the world middleweight boxing championship. But he dared to take on the white boxing establishment and this led to his downfall. Maurice Hope, and more recently Nigel Benn, have been in similar scrapes with the hierarchy to their detriment. In spite of winning a gold medal at Los Angeles, Tessa Sanderson always alleged that she got inferior support and sponsorship to that offered to her arch-rival and team-mate Fatima Whitbread, who was regarded by the athletics establishment as their golden girl.

These issues are at the heart of Dave Hill's book on Barnes. A Black kid from a Jamaican middle-class background, his father was a big-wig in the military and arranged for 'his boy' to get a

disciplined upbringing. This was regarded as the main ingredient for helping John to cope with the rigours of professional football as well as the racism in the sport, the boardroom, the dressing room, on the pitch and on the terraces. Because of his background, he was regarded as resilient to the obnoxious abuse hurled at him from terraces. Like his father, he was regarded as a 'chip off the old block' (as opposed to having 'a chip on the shoulder').

Hill gives a splendid insight into the contrasting fortunes of Blacks in British post-war soccer and vividly exposes the additional burdens that the Black footballers have to carry before they even get the opportunity to enter the big arena for their disproportionate share of vilification because of their skin pigmentation.

Barnes did not cooperate with Hill's book; he refused to have anything to do with it and has since denounced it publicly. All the revelations about Barnes are what has emerged from those who know him. He is not one for rocking the boat. He has let his skills do most of the talking – and done so with tremendous success, as he has won over the many doubters and is widely admired. But, above all, he has 'succeeded' because he could joke about himself, ignore racist jokes, crack a few himself and endure 'piss-taking'. He had to do so to survive and succeed in the macho, racist, homophobic and sexist environment that is associated with football generally, and more specifically within the highly charged atmosphere surrounding Liverpool Football Club.

In contrast, there are many Black footballers who have 'failed' not because of their lack of skill, or 'bottle' (which they were accused of in the early days; now they are regarded as 'aggressive'), or commitment to get to the top through hard work – or, indeed, because of flawed temperament. They 'failed' because they were not prepared to compromise their principles. They would not always accept the extent of racist tauntings, would not accept it as 'all good fun', have refused to turn the other cheek, would not change their lifestyles and would not forsake their roots in the 'ghetto' altogether.

Some have allowed the crowd to get on to their backs and affect their performance – which in football terms means 'you are dead'. This happens to white and Black players. Fans would boo any players they particularly disliked, even their own if they felt they could destroy them. Such is the extent of virulent racism on the terraces that Black opposing players are virtually always targeted as they are regarded as having short fuses and liable to self-destruct under pressure.

Howard Gayle was a Liverpool-born Black who made the breakthrough into the Liverpool Football Club ranks but was finally rejected as a 'failure' because he would not conform. Unlike Barnes, who is highly regarded by Blacks in Liverpool 8 for his skill and

resilience, which enabled him to survive a racist environment, 'Howie' is regarded as a real hero because he did not compromise. He refused to 'take the crap' and was shown the door. Gayle has become a football sojourner to survive in the game, but he was, and still is, regarded by many as no less skilful than Barnes.

Hill's book shows that some of the conflicts facing soccer are a microcosm of society in Britain. He encapsulates with great dexterity the near unanimity of approach by the game's administrators, pundits, journalists, TV commentators and others in the game's hierarchy in covering-up or turning a blind eye to the real problems of racism. For instance, Merseyside clubs like Liverpool and Everton believe that the reason why so few Black people go to watch their games is because there are so few of them and they are not interested in football. The opposite is true in other parts of England, where black youth can be found in large numbers as players and spectators. Hill also shows that Black people, particularly in Merseyside, are more involved in the game at grassroots level and in the minor leagues, but steadfastly refuse to risk damage to life or limb or tolerate virulent racist abuse on the terraces or around the ground to support either of their famous local teams.

Hill does justice to the story of how Barnes shone above the racism in Liverpool to superstardom. He rightly describes the progress of Black footballers in a white English environment as 'truly and remarkably heroic'. His own admiration for them as they assert themselves on the field of play 'against enormous odds, refusing to be denied access to a milieu whose chronic introversion is driving it towards self-destruction', leads to him drooling a little too much over the Barnes' 'legend'. But perhaps this is necessary to redress the balance of racism that has driven many people away from football, not just the Black residents of Liverpool. In proclaiming Barnes, and acknowledging that the Colonel's son is not the revolutionary type, Hill places Barnes in the hearts of British citizens the length and breadth of his (Barnes') adopted nation as testimony to the existence of 'a football community that is more fair-minded, more gracious and more appreciative of the true glory of the game than that sorry set of spivs and jingoists which currently hogs the foreground'.

Yet the serious underlying issues that have to be tackled in English society must also be tackled in football by its rulers. If not, the legend of 'Barnsey' will be consigned to folklore whilst the booing, taunting and hatred will go on. The Barnes's of this world will always be regarded by them as 'one of us' and the others as fair game for destruction.

London HERMAN OUSELEY

Paul Robeson

By MARTIN BAUML DUBERMAN (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1988). 804pp. £20.00

Paul Robeson was a man of extra-ordinary talent. Son of a preacher born into slavery, he gained an academic scholarship to Rutgers University, led the debating team, became an all-American football star and graduated from Columbia law school; he became a leading concert singer and stage actor and starred in something like a dozen films (albeit, with one exception, lousy ones). In the pre-pubescence of the mass media, before long-playing records, before television, before the Grammies, Paul Robeson was for close on forty years a household name in the African-American community, throughout the United States, in England and Europe, in Soviet Russia and in progressive circles in colonised countries throughout the world.

But today, when entertainers gain fame in the Warhol unit of time, Robeson, foremost interpreter of negro spirituals, has been buried beneath the homogenised pulp of song and dance which passes for the popular culture of which, in its truest form, he was so passionately an advocate. It was that passion, in fact, that got him buried deep in national oblivion, and it was his political commitment to his audiences and to the well-spring from which he derived his inspiration that led him to his undertakers, J. Edgar Hoover and Senator McCarthy. It is to the credit of Martin B. Duberman that he has created in this biography of Robeson a monument commensurate with its subject, a marker which does justice to the man.

Duberman reveals Robeson as an immensely attractive personality – a man who is serious, principled and, above all, humble. Always a foe of racial discrimination and social injustice, it was not until he was in his thirties that he developed a political dimension to his moral principles. His visit to Russia in 1934-5 introduced him to a society in which he discovered 'a complete lack of racism'. He saw Soviet policy towards 'the national minorities' (the Uzbeks, Yakuts and myriad others) as contrasting markedly with the personal and institutional racism faced by blacks, Chinese, latinos and others in the United States. In 1936, the Spanish Civil War provided him with the first opportunity for real action on behalf of 'these fellows [who] fought not only for Spain but for me and the whole world'.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the bitterest of the cold war years, Robeson spoke favourably of the Soviet Union, sent his son to school in Moscow, performed throughout the USSR and eastern Europe, and spoke to blacks and trade unionists in Britain and the United States on racism, civil rights, anti-fascism at home and anti-colonialism abroad. Under surveillance by Hoover and the FBI since

1940, interrogated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, his passport withdrawn and throughout this period hounded by a press whose enthusiasm for his singing dissolved into class revulsion for his politics, Robeson's voice was effectively stilled. But he never stopped fighting. And in 1958 he succeeded in getting his passport back and made a momentous tour including Britain, USSR, India and Australia. At the end of the tour, however, he took very ill. He died in 1976.

What one is looking for in a political biography – the personal details of the subject's life and thought engaged with the social and political events of the day – Duberman has achieved with considerable, though not total, success. He has captured in Robeson's life some part of the 'Harlem Renaissance', the social and political activity of the British Left in the 1930s, the disparate strands of black self-determination and white liberalism which conjoined in the 1960s as the Civil Rights movement; and, of course, that chilling genre of American fascism, political surveillance and subpoena. Duberman has woven his way through the wide range of worlds and periods which Robeson inhabited with great command of the material and empathy for the personal politics of his subject.

But we are left somewhat uncertain as to how Robeson himself stood in relation to these events and issues. Part of the problem is, as Duberman recognises, his subject's natural reserve and the relative paucity of his personal writing. In the early years, this has entailed a reliance on the diaries of Robeson's overweeningly ambitious wife, Essie, resulting in a portrayal of their life as an endless whirl of social events with the glitterati of the day, leaving little impression of Robeson's principles or politics. We do not hear, for instance, how Robeson himself explains his taking Charles Gilpin's role in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*.

Similarly, we read the comments of C.L.R. James portraying Robeson as 'a distinguished person giving himself to revolutionary views' in contrast to Richard Wright, who was 'a revolutionary political person, whose whole life was spent . . . striking blows at capitalist society'. But we do not hear Robeson's views on James, Wright, Padmore, Du Bois or the politics they represented. While we read of Emma Goldman, Sergei Eisenstein and Gertrude Stein and their admiration for Robeson, we do not get much of a hint of how Robeson felt about their thoughts and activities.

Centrally, the question of Robeson's non-denunciation of Stalinism remains unresolved. It is still not clear as to whether he knew what was going on in Stalinist Russia or not – and, if so, what he thought about it. On the evidence of his singing 'Zog Nit Kaynmal', the Warsaw Ghetto resistance song, to a hushed hall in Moscow having just talked with a Jewish friend, it seems he did know at least some of what Stalin was perpetrating upon his people. It is left to the reader to assume

that his refusal to denounce Stalin or the Soviet Union to the American press and government of the time was an omission which spoke to his loyalty to the general cause of anti-fascism rather than to some interpretation of blind faith in the Party – of which he was never a member.

Robeson's truest and farthest reaching message was, ultimately, for another audience. Following his death in 1976, a black prisoner in the Marion, Illinois, penitentiary wrote of him:

They knocked the leaves
From his limbs
The bark
From his
Tree
But his roots
were
so deep
That they are
a part of me.

Boston HUBERT MURRAY

Loosen the Shackles: first report of the Liverpool 8 Inquiry into race relations in Liverpool

By LORD GIFFORD QC (Chair), WALLY BROWN and RUTH BUNDEY (London, Karia Press, 1989). 262pp. £7.95

'There is nothing worse than walking down the street and a 2-year-old calls you a nigger.'

'[T]he only Black girl in a school . . . had not liked it because the others "bossed her about"; when asked about this she replied that she had had to go to hospital, once with a broken arm and once with a broken nose. She . . . found it unremarkable . . .'

'A teacher said "all these kids understand is the whip".'

'A Black toddler was painted white . . . he was covered with paint in a similar incident last year. The kids tell him to get inside the fridge to turn white.'

'"We are the OSD and we're nigger hunting tonight."'

This first report of the Liverpool 8 Inquiry is a brave document. Its authors, clearly shocked at what they saw and heard, have carefully documented the evidence of as many black community members – and teachers, social workers, housing officials, councillors and MPs – as

would talk to them. They have not taken the Scarman option of laundering the words, keeping the evidence in voluminous separate documents for none but the archivists and academics to peruse, and softening the conclusions to deny the reality of institutionalised racism. The words of the victims of that racism hit the reader with the force of truthful testimony, and that is the report's greatest strength.

What emerges is a portrait of a black community living under conditions echoing those of colonial occupation. Council housing allocation policies and racial terrorism keep the community physically 'in its place' in the poorest, most neglected, southern part of the city. The physical environment is demoralising: Granby Street, the heart of the area, is a row of derelict and boarded-up shops and small business premises; streets are dirty and unswept; the used needles of heroin addicts litter the patches of balding grass in front of the public housing.

In education, the location of schools, the threat of closure which has been hanging over area schools for a decade, cuts and shortages, together with racist teaching and racial abuse and attack, offer an education in rejection and failure. Black educational enterprises such as the Charles Wootton Centre (named after a Liverpool black seaman chased to his death by a racist mob in 1919) survive against the odds on next to nothing, and can offer hope of training to only a very few.

In the employment market, long-hallowed discriminatory practices within the local council and in the private sector keep most black people not just out of white-collar jobs, but out of any job. Those who, despite the odds created by giving their address, make it to the interview, are confronted with the time-worn refrain, 'Sorry, the job's just been filled'.

The strongest echo of colonialism is in policing. Riot vans of the OSD – the para-military Operational Support Division – race round the streets of the neighbourhood, placing passers-by and the local community at some peril and making normal life impossible. Or they sit at night on street-corners (often on overtime) waiting to respond to 'incidents' which never seem to happen, with officers emerging to provoke black passers-by, and make some arrests for violent disorder. The exceptionally high acquittal rate for those charged with public order offences in Liverpool 8 does not seem to have created any concern in the judicial authorities, or in the Police Authority with its statutory function of overseeing the police, that anything is significantly wrong with policing in the area. Gone is its battling chairperson, Margaret Simey, who took up the cudgels against the terror tactics of Liverpool's police in 1981. In 1989 the Authority has been tamed, and sees no necessity to participate in the inquiry.

And when the community in Liverpool 8 demands that police take

action to stop the selling of hard drugs in the area, by outside dealers, they are ignored. Hard drug dealing takes place under the noses of the police in some cases, but still no arrests are made. According to an ex-police officer, David Scott, who gave evidence to the inquiry, this is deliberate policy: police allow hard drug dealing to spread so that 'the community would be left to dope itself up, or keep the lid on . . . focussing its activity upon drug circulation and use'. This witness, forced out of the police by the racism he was subjected to because of his marriage to a black woman, also testified to the manufacture of overtime by inventing 'incidents' in Liverpool 8 to respond to. He and his wife were arrested by his former colleagues and charged with criminal deception within days of the report's publication.

The limitations and weaknesses of the report are perhaps inherent in the Inquiry's terms of reference. It was set up and funded by Liverpool City Council as earnest of its desire to improve its 'record of service' to its black population, and also in response to the bitter grievances being expressed by Liverpool 8 people, mainly about policing. Thus, the incorporation of sometimes very specific recommendations, which may well be useful to a local authority genuinely concerned to put its own house in order, look astonishingly naive when directed towards a police force whose Chief Constable told his officers not to participate in the inquiry, and towards a Home Secretary which refused to give any credence to the report because – the police not having participated – it was 'one-sided'.

The authors do, however, intend to keep the local authority who funded the inquiry on its toes. One of their proposals is to reconvene at intervals and check on the progress being made in implementing the recommendations and dismantling the institutional structures which are demoralising and destroying the community. Meanwhile, what they have achieved is to provide an articulation of the anger of those who will not let their community be destroyed, and a rallying point for future struggle.

London FRANCES WEBBER

Woman – Nation – State

Edited by NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS and FLOYA ANTHIAS (London, Macmillan, 1989). 185pp. £29.50 hb, £12.99, pb

How, asks *Woman–Nation–State*, has the idea of what constitutes the nation been fashioned around and through women? In this collection of essay-case studies a number of women (mainly academics) examine that question in relation to nine countries.

The two most stimulating contributions are on South Africa and

Israel – perhaps they work best and fit the book's schema because both these nations are built around racist ideologies. Deborah Gaitskell and Elaine Unterhalter provide a fascinating comparison between the use of motherhood and the idea of women's suffering in the nationalisms of the Afrikaner and the African national liberation movements. They show how, because a different concept of the nation operates in the two cases, the suffering of motherhood has led the ANC to call for women's emancipation, whereas in Afrikaner nationalism women have consciously been kept in the home and out of public life. A threat from the state sends African mothers appealing to other mothers across the racial divide whilst Afrikaner women prefer to strengthen their own exclusive group. Rights for Afrikaner women, for example, became a priority only when their use to race and nation was critical.

Even more 'racially' precarious than the Afrikaner state is the Israeli one. Founded as a secular (not a religious) state, but a state specifically for one people only, the biological reproduction of Jewish Israeli women has become of utmost importance both in defining who is a Jew and in reproducing enough Jews to maintain the Israeli state. Nira Yuval-Davis's 'National reproduction and "the Demographic Race" in Israel' shows how marriage and divorce laws, access to birth control and child benefit are intimately linked 'with claims over territories and citizenship rights, class divisions and plans of mass transfer'. Her chapter is the one which justifies the book's title and remit.

Of the remaining contributors, some look at women literally as the breeders of the nation, some only at the ideological construction of women by the state, while others again do neither. The result is a somewhat uneven book. Francesca Klug, for example, who looks at Britain, keeps to a very narrow focus – the place of women in the history of racist and sexist immigration and nationality laws. Despite her attempts to carry over some of the 'constructionist' language used in the academic setting-the-scene introduction, she fails completely to analyse the place of women in racist discourse or the attempts by black women to change that discourse through struggle. Marie de Lepervanche's examination of Australia's immigration, nationality and population policies towards women is equally constricted (and empirical).

One reason why the contributions do not sit happily together is because the writers, though all focusing on women, come out of differing disciplines. Thus Christine Obbo presents a straight anthropological account of women's place in Uganda. Though she presents an ideological dimension about what constitutes 'the proper woman', there is little discussion of race and nationalism. Two chapters are historical accounts (one on the place of women in the statements of Italian parties and organisations in the setting up of the Republic, the

other on women's emancipation and the formation of the Turkish state and national identity after 1923). Though of some interest in themselves, they have little connection to present realities and struggles.

Haleh Afshar (writing on Iran) and Floya Anthias (writing on Cyprus) present the reader with other problems. They have too much to say in the space allowed and, instead of their chapters presenting coherent arguments, they break apart into separate discrete, disconnected sections – as though bits were pulled together almost at random from some more grandiose theses elsewhere.

The idea for the book was a good one. But it does not really fulfil its promise because it lacks a tying together of so many tantalising loose ends. Under what circumstances does the nationalist project emancipate women, under what circumstances does it oppress them? How can women fight to change not only their role as mothers of the nation, but the concept of the nation itself? How have settler societies differed from other nation states? How has the ideological construction of women been modified by colonialism, imperialism, the threat of war or the mode of production? It is a book to provoke questions rather than provide answers.

A final grouse – £12.99 is an exorbitant price to pay for such provocation.

Institute of Race Relations JENNY BOURNE

Those Long Afternoons: childhood in colonial Ceylon

By E.F.C. LUDOWYK (Colombo, Lake House, 1989). 96pp. Rs.175.00, UK £5.95, US$9.25

There seems to have been a time in Ceylon, a decade or two before independence, when the colonial clock ceased and watched the rise of a generation of men and women who, without falling prey either to the blandishments of the coloniser's culture or the excesses of their own, imbibed the virtues of both. It was a generation that was at ease in the drawing rooms of Europe as it was in the kitchens of Kalutara. Weaned in the romantic period of Trotskyism and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, its outlook was international without being cosmopolitan, patriotic without being chauvinist, humane if not socialist – and it helped to produce a welfare state with free education and a free medical service. It represented the high-noon of late Ceylonese civilisation, a sort of Ceylonese Renaissance in culture and politics, a brief interlude in Sri Lankan history between the depredations of colonialism and the decadence of race war.

Lyn Ludowyk was, in one sense, a progenitor of that generation,

in another, its finest flower. As a teacher of English Literature, he taught us not only to savour the language (with taste-buds developed by our own) but to appropriate the authors, their insights, so as to enrich, not be a substitute for, our native experience. He taught us, that is, to take out the universal in them and apply it to our particularities. He localised Shakespeare while still leaving him in England – and opened us out to the possibilities of our own cultures while showing us the achievements of theirs.

As a chronicler and historian, he sought, in the *Footprint of the Buddha,* the *Story of Ceylon* and the *Modern History of Ceylon,* to restore to his countrymen and women some understanding of our lost continuities.

As an individual, he was the soul of generosity and grace.

I have often wondered how he grew into these things. What was his childhood like? Was the child, indeed, the father of the man? And so it was with some avidity that I turned to his memories of childhood in *Those Long Afternoons,* published posthumously by his great friend and bibliophile, Ian Goonetileke.

But, characteristically, Ludowyk's book is not of himself. It is, instead, what it says it is: a childhood in colonial Ceylon. A particular childhood, perhaps: middle-class, Burgher, English-speaking and lived in a city within a city, an old Dutch fort in Southern Ceylon – but also a childhood that, in its manners and up-bringing and imbrications in the extended family, differed little from less well-to-do Sinhalese or Tamil childhoods of the time. And Sinhalese, indeed, was the language that connected Lyn more evocatively to the world around him. 'The world which I knew on my senses, the world which responded to the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of everyday objects around me was more readily available to me through colloquial Sinhalese than through English. Even now I can gauge the rough texture of words and phrases which made that world emotionally concrete.'

It was Lyn's gift, however, that he could capture that world so graphically and acutely. The superstitions and fears, the joys and wonderment of growing up are all evoked here in language as lyrical as it is precise. The descriptions of places and things are etched with the finesse of an engraver, and his uncles and aunts and cousins and officials and servants step out of the book alive and three dimensional and quick to the touch. He was a natural story-teller with total recall.

> We lie in wait for our memories of infancy, waylaying, even assailing them for some clue of the unremembered past. But nothing comes of these forays, nothing but stirrings of sights, sounds, the feel of the body's reaction to forgotten impressions. What can one make of them, brimful of meaning as they once were, but signifying nothing now.

But one does not recall without interpreting – or, rather, one interprets in the way one recalls and what. And it is there, in the slant and selection of the stories told and the events captured, that one glimpses Lyn's great gift for deriving truth from facts and making 'one little room an everywhere'.

Even as I write I am conscious that what was meant to be a review has slipped into reminiscence, but that too is the pull of the book. It summons you back to

. . . a child's
Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
Through the parables
Of sun light
And the legends of the green chapels

And the twice told fields of infancy
That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine.

Institute of Race Relations A. SIVANANDAN

The Political Economy of the West Bank 1967-1987: from peripheralization to development

By ADEL SAMARA (London, Khamsin; Jerusalem, al-Mashriq, 1988). 184pp.

Many scholars and writers have focused their attention in recent years on the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip under Israeli occupation. This study, however, is one of the very few to tackle seriously the structural socio-economic and political relationship between Israel and the territories. In doing so, it highlights the occupation authorities' drive towards implanting settler colonialism on the West Bank since 1967.

Both in his historical introduction and in his theoretical framework, Samara places Zionist colonialism in relation to the centres of the capitalist world order, and the ever growing dependence of the Israeli economy on American subsidy – which pays for the machinery of control and repression in the territories. The following chapters sketch the mechanisms instituted and methods employed by Israel to integrate, subordinate and peripheralise the West Bank economy, with a particular emphasis on the fate of the land and agriculture. Useful data and statistics support an analysis of an Israeli policy which aims at severing the people from their land and then recruiting this work force as cheap migrant labour for the Zionist economy. A variety of administrative and military orders are imposed on the Palestinians in

order to maintain unequal and exploitative exchange between the two economies. As a consequence, West Bank capitalism, already stifled under the pre-1967 Jordanian administration, remains underdeveloped, deformed and peripheralised by the Israeli economy.

Many related themes, such as internal socio-economic strata and class differentiation on the West Bank, are referred to only briefly. However, the author, a radical Palestinian writer who lives on the West Bank, does point out that certain local classes collaborate with the occupation authorities in reinforcing the process of dislocation and peripheralisation. In this, he includes big landowners, merchants, traders and comprador capitalists, some of whom were created by the occupation forces to maintain structural dependency and peripheral capitalism.

Having extensively documented the general features of the West Bank's political economy, Samara concludes by suggesting a progressive approach to development. A strategy for dealing with rural and agricultural development problems would have to be based on popular production cooperatives. To illustrate his argument, he draws on theoretical and comparative studies of Third World pre-capitalist societies and their political economies. Such cooperatives would constitute the starting point for strengthening the Palestinian farmers and landless peasants and labourers, increasing self-sufficiency in basic needs and bolstering the population's general steadfastness in the face of Israel's land grabbing.

There is no doubt that some of the catalysts for the current Palestinian *intifada* are found in the process of dislocation and repression sketched above. The *intifada* itself has forced the question of Palestinian statehood in the territories to the top of the regional and international agenda. A Palestinian state was consequently declared by the Palestine National Council in Algeria in November 1988 in order to consolidate the national achievement of the popular uprising.

Samara's work is timely in that it highlights the need for a fundamental change in the orientation of the West Bank economy so as to reduce its structural dependency and lay the infrastructure for real socio-economic and political independence. It helps to focus on issues vital for the success of the *intifada* and of the Palestinians as a viable national entity.

London NUR MASALHA

Books received

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Antiracist strategies. Edited by Alrick X. Cambridge and Stephan Feuchtwang. Aldershot, Avebury, 1990. Cloth £25

Behind the facade: migrant workers and the private rented sector in Kensington & Chelsea. London, Kensington & Chelsea Race and Housing Action Group, 1989. Paper

Black star: a view of the life and times of Kwame Nkrumah. By Basil Davidson. Boulder, Westview Press, 1989. Paper

Cameroon: dependence and independence. By Mark W. DeLancey. Aldershot, Gower, 1989. Cloth £19.50

Caribbean reflections: the life and times of a Trinidad scholar (1902-1986). By W. Besson and J. Besson. London, Karia Press, 1989.

Church and liberation in Namibia. Edited by Peter Katjavivi, Per Frostin and Kaire Mbuende. London, Pluto Press, 1989. Cloth £17.50, paper £6.95

The color line and the quality of life in America. By Reynolds Farley and Walter R. Allen. New York, Oxford University Press, 1989. Paper £11.95.

Consistency of US foreign policy: the gulf War and the Iran-Contra affair. Edited by Abbas Alnasrawi and Cheryl Rubenberg. Belmont, Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1989. Paper

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Critique of economic reason. By André Gorz. London, Verso, 1989. Cloth £25.95, paper £8.95

Dominant languages: language and hierarchy in Britain and France. By R.D. Grillo. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. Cloth £25

Empire and emancipation. By Jan Nederveen Pieterse. London, Pluto 1990. Paper £12.95

Enterprising neighbours: the development of the Community Association movement in Britain. Edited by Raymond Clarke. London, National Federation of Community Associations, 1990.

Ethnicity: identity, conflict and crisis. Edited by Kumar David and Santasilan Kadirgamar. Kowloon, Arena Press, 1989.

The hidden struggle: statutory and voluntary sector responses to violence against black women in the home. By Amina Mama. London, London Race and Housing Research Unit, 1989. Paper £6.95

Higher than hope: the authorized biography of Nelson Mandela. By Fatima Meer. London, Hamish Hamilton, 1990. Cloth £15.99

International law and the Dalits in India. By Dr.Y. N. Kly. Geneva, Dalit Liberation Education Trust, 1989. Paper

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Linford Christie: an autobiography. By Linford Christie with Tony Ward. London, Stanley Paul, 1989. Cloth £12.95

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Natural rebels: a social history of enslaved black women in Barbados. By Hilary McD. Beckles. London, Zed, 1989. Cloth £29.95, paper £8.95

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Political killings in Southern Sri Lanka: on the brink of civil war. By Eduardo Marino. London, International Alert, 1989. Paper

The politics of public health. By Meredith Turshen. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1989.

Rise and organise: the birth of the workers and national movements in Jamaica (1936–1939). By Richard Hart. London, Karia, 1989.

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Spiritual warfare: the politics of the Christian Right. By Sara Diamond. London, Pluto Press, 1989. Cloth £17.50

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The theory of African literature: implications for practical criticism. By Chidi Amutal. London, Zed, 1989. Paper

The UMNO Drama: power struggles in Malaysia. By Fan Yew Teng. Kuala Lumpur, Egret Books, 1989.

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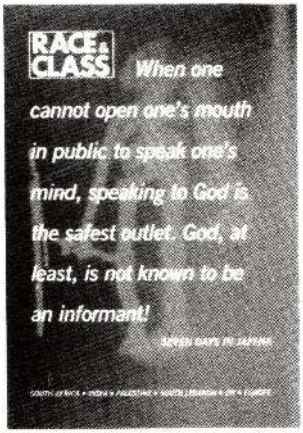

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