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RACE & CLASS

A JOURNAL FOR BLACK AND THIRD WORLD LIBERATION

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Knowledge in production*

The designations 'information age', 'second industrial revolution' and 'electronics revolution' are all attempts at uniting under one banner the totality of recent developments in computers, digital telecommunications, robotics, bio-engineering and materials science. Use of the word 'revolution' recognises the nature of these new technologies as qualitatively different from what has gone before.

Technology, according to Webster's Dictionary, can be defined as the sum 'of the means employed to provide objects necessary for human sustenance and comfort'. As such, 'technology' comprises not only the machinery and tools required for production, but also workers' skills and the organisation of production. But the technologies of this new era are distinguished from technologies of the industrial age by their high knowledge content – they can be characterised as knowledge-intensive. This distinction is warranted for two converging reasons. First, our widening understanding of nature, especially in the life and material sciences, is yielding dramatic benefits in productivity, thereby reducing labour, machinery and raw material requirements in production. Second, the ability to record workers' skills (another form of knowledge) and encode this knowledge (using digital electronics) into the instruments of production, and then to play it back in the absence of humans, reduces labour requirements in

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production. With the diminishing contributions of machinery and raw materials and labour, knowledge emerges as the dominating component in production.

As knowledge's role in production becomes dominant, it threatens the stability and viability of a system organised around the exchange of goods, based on ability to pay. Briefly put, the new technologies undermine current social relations, particularly with respect to labour.

For our present purposes, we define *data* as raw perceptions captured by some data-collection device. The Landsat satellite, for example, is capable of photographing the entire Earth's surface every two weeks, and has been operating for twenty years. Ninety-five per cent of these images have never been seen by human eyes.[1]

Information is data with human labour applied to it. In its broadest sense, information includes experiences, perceptions, symbols, imagery, signals and data that have been collected, organised, perhaps analysed, and then expressed in some form. The key point here is that information is the product of human intellectual activity – effort has been expended on putting the data into a form capable of satisfying some need or want. Using the Landsat example, the satellite photographs that have been examined and catalogued would qualify as 'information'. Information also includes transactions, customer lists, mail, news, research reports, and so forth.

Knowledge is a further refinement of information. It, too, is a product of human labour. It is information that has been systematised and integrated, organised so that it is relevant to natural and social processes. Pursuing the Landsat example, an understanding of weather patterns, climate trends, mineral deposits or land usage might be examples of knowledge derived from the catalogued and studied photographs. The focus here is on knowledge as a component of production.[2]

The nature of knowledge in production

Production cannot take place without knowledge. Some understanding of the production process is required so that production can take place. Just as knowledge makes production possible, more knowledge enhances it – that is, it increases productivity. In one of its most obvious forms, additional knowledge, in the form of a worker's superior skill, enables him or her to accomplish a task more quickly, more easily and with less waste.

Knowledge in production takes many forms. In addition to being brought to the production process by the worker as 'skills', it might be contained in the organisation of production like the 'assembly line' or the 'work team', or in the design of tools or machinery, in the production process, in the chemical formulae, in the molecular

structure of a composite material or the DNA sequence of a bio-engineered protein, or in the software algorithm. Knowledge might be represented by the conservation techniques, or methods of utilising waste and by-products, or inventory management theories.

Knowledge mobilises the benefits of nature. Scientific and techno-logical knowledge – the universe as understood by society – is nature's bounty discovered. It deepens or enhances or enlarges the environment in which production (and all other human activity) takes place.

Knowledge has a material basis: it cannot exist separately from some 'container' – memory, books, computer disks, and so on. But knowledge, in and of itself, cannot create a house or a loaf of bread or a computer; its usefulness manifests itself only through the production process. It can generate useful things only when labour applies it during production. Knowledge can be disseminated, but may be useless without the labour to apply it. Knowledge has, indeed, a social origin: it is the result of people interacting. Technology and invention are not the products of solitary inventors or scientists; rather, inventors and scientists build on the past accomplishments, experiences and dis-coveries of generations of scientists, engineers, authors, production workers, and so on.

Finally, it should be noted that knowledge has peculiar qualities which distinguish it from labour, machinery, raw materials and other components of production. Two people can use some bit of knowledge simultaneously, it can be duplicated ad infinitum at almost no cost, it can circulate around the globe in seconds, it is not 'consumed' or exhausted as it is used, and the more it is shared, the more it grows.[3] These qualities give knowledge a unique and subversive role in commodity production.

Now, as throughout history, humans labour and, as a result of that labour, society learns more about the universe. The amount of knowledge increases; this knowledge shows up in technology. The development of the means of production is the accumulation of the experience of workers, refined by them into knowledge and congealed in technology.

One of the general processes throughout the evolution of technology has been the transference of human skills and attributes to the machinery and techniques used in production. The need for humans as a source of physical power began to disappear with the domestication of animals and the harnessing of wind and water power. Later, the need for humans as dexterous manipulators of materials began to disappear with the development of machinery that used gears, ratchets, springs, cams, etc., to replicate human motion.

Most recently, the human functions of 'operator' and 'decision-maker' have been usurped as the worker's knowledge is abstracted and programmed into numerical control ROMs, and the decision-making

is replaced by 'artificial intelligence' programmes. This last stage has only been possible with the development of cybernetics, information theory, transistors and a host of other technologies in the period around the second world war. These technologies laid the basis for replicating functions of the human brain in inanimate electronic equivalents harnessed to machinery. With the invention in the late 1960s of low-cost programmable microprocessors and memory chips, knowledge could be converted into sequences of computer code and be processed by semiconductors at a speed of millions of simple instructions per second to direct machinery. In the past, the machine operator served as guide and overseer, steering and monitoring abilities difficult to reproduce by mechanical means only. But the advent of new technologies allowed the machine operator's function to be abstracted and encoded, eliminating the need for an operator at all. Thus began the assault on the last outpost occupied by humans in the production process.

One key factor of knowledge-intensive production, then, is that the human aspect of production is 'recorded' as it were, digitised, and is capable of being 'replayed' ad infinitum. Knowledge becomes a 'direct force of production'.[4] What remains of the labouring process is the ever-shrinking pool of tasks like servicing or designing that are still beyond the dexterity or 'programmability' of evolving technology; or tasks for which the cost of the automated machinery exceeds the labour required to carry it out.

The knowledge brought to mass manufacturing by workers (in the form of skills) or embodied in the machinery does not comprise the total required: knowledge is also embedded in the organisation of production itself. The traditional assembly line was set up once, after which it ran without variation for month after month. Workers were assigned one task. Any change necessitated extensive revision and readjustment. Current trends such as 'lean production' are not hard-coded in this way, but are intentionally malleable so that they can take advantage of new knowledge as it becomes available. This 'new knowledge' appears as the outcome of ever-evolving experience with a particular manufacturing process; or as changes ordered by management; and – a recent 'innovation' – the taking and rewarding of input from those who actually carry out the work. In the latter case, a neo-Taylorism emerges, where, instead of dictates coming down from above as they did in the past, workers in teams on the shop floor study ways to tailor themselves more tightly to the task.

A production system with more knowledge applied to it will be more productive. Differentials in labour, energy and material costs are, of course, important, but it is not these factors that are credited for the market-place success of, say, Japanese manufacturers, the originators of 'lean' (i.e., knowledge-intensive) production methods. 'A critical

point was reached [in the development of production technologies] when the American automobile industry finally acknowledged that Japanese firms had established a real production advantage based on the more effective use of capital – that is, in the effective organisation of labour and equipment – not on low-cost labour.'[5]

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In knowledge-intensive production, significant amounts of scientific research (mental labour) are carried out outside of and prior to actual production. The outcome of such research is then brought to production in the form of designs, new materials, techniques, algorithms, biotechnologies, etc. The products of this scientific effort employ a deeper understanding of natural processes, down to the molecular and atomic level. Some new materials 'remember' qualities when exposed to light or temperature changes; others are superconductive; still others facilitate data transmission at the speed of light. Toffler describes this leap in productive forces: 'Second Wave industries used brute force technologies – they punched, hammered, rolled, beat, chipped and chopped, drilled and battered raw materials into the shapes we needed or wanted... The Third Wave industries operate at an altogether deeper level. Instead of banging something into shape, we reach back into the material itself and reprogram it to assume the shape we desire.'[6] As a result, 'new materials and biotechnologies, along with information technologies, undercut the value of many existing sources of natural resources, since they allow the replacement of one material with another, or permit the more efficient use of already available objects'.[7] Intellectual work beforehand substitutes for material (and labour, as described above) in production. This has always been the case, but the rate of substitution has accelerated, and its application is facilitated by new technologies, such as telecommunications which disperse them, and flexible manufacturing methods which enable their ready implementation.

Developments in science and technology reinforce the fact that we have made a radical break with our industrial past. Electronic technology and cybernetics enable instructions and information to be coded in digital electrical pulses, instead of gears, ratchets and springs. The result is components (e.g., digital communication switches) that do not suffer from friction or fatigue, and operate at speeds and load levels which are orders of magnitude greater than their mechanical counterparts. A constantly repeating sequence of instructions does not wear out a processor chip in the way that repeated actions eventually wear out a piston or camshaft.[8] Beyond solid-state electronics, the developing field of 'molecular electronics' utilises the properties of

proteins and bacteria in production.* The notion of bacteria tirelessly creating polymers in a laboratory vat (now a possibility), without the cost of locating, drilling, pumping, transporting and processing oil to achieve the same result, suggests a level of productivity that is qualitatively different from previous forms of productive forces. Or consider the particular case of the computer software industry. Software, the instructions that direct machinery, is knowledge encoded. It is distilled experience and learning listed out in instructions for hardware. Forty years ago, there was no software industry. In 1990, the global market for packaged software was estimated at $43 billion, and is expected to reach $100 billion by 1995.[10]

But where does software stop and hardware begin? The distinction becomes fuzzy when machinery incorporates chips with instructions 'burned into' them. Chip masks for semiconductor production have been legally defined as a form of writing, and once a mask of acceptable quality is developed, it becomes something like a printing plate for reproducing chips (and money). Even the metals and composite ceramics used in production are now spoken of as being 'smart', as in 'the smarter the material, the less it weighs'.[11]

In examining the nature of knowledge in production, we might look for quantitative measurements to justify calling the new technologies 'knowledge-intensive'. Knowledge (admittedly a soft term) can take the form of 'already-known' knowledge, as in existing technology, training, education, copies of software, etc., or of 'newly-known' knowledge, the result of research and development.

The extensive training required to master new technologies, and the need for ongoing education to keep up to date with a given field, indicates the volume of already-known knowledge required for contemporary production. Or one might use the number of instructions built into a machine in a state-of-the-art factory, or years of education per worker to measure 'knowledge-intensity'.

One measurement of newly-known knowledge might be the relative portion of design effort that goes into a product, versus the actual production effort. 'Information, design, research and development and software represent a growing proportion of the value of most products', note the authors of *Beyond the Casino Economy*, an analysis of Great Britain's economy. 'As the importance of research and development rises relative to that of direct production, the purpose of labour is increasingly the production of knowledge, in the form of designs or production processes.'[12] The recording of knowledge in the

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* 'A protein isolated from bacteria found in salt marshes is proving to be a promising device for data storage in a molecule ... A group of researchers from Syracuse University reported they optically stored and retrieved data in three dimensions in a tiny block made of molecules of bacteriorhodapsin.' Only six 1cm cubes of the molecules are needed to store the entire Library of Congress.[9]

form of software makes up ever greater proportions of pivotal tools and industries. Software becomes a larger and larger cost of increasingly complex production systems: 'Software now accounts for about 80 per cent of the development expense for new systems', according to *Computer Design* magazine in 1987.[13] Even in manufacturing, software plays a central role. 'Retooling', with the new 'flexible manufacturing systems', simply means changing the software that guides the machines. The assembly-line (hardware) remains unchanged. The robots, hardly pausing, begin exercising different actions in obedience to the newly-loaded programmes.

Scott Lash has suggested that the number of models per design serves as a crude indicator of the relative amount of knowledge that goes into a good. For example, a model of a car of which only 10,000 'copies' are made has a higher design or knowledge content than a model of which 20,000 are made.[14] The trend in manufacturing has been towards smaller production runs, with more frequent model changes, suggesting, therefore, a higher design/knowledge content.

Finally, we might look at employment statistics as an indicator of the changing character of the productive forces. By 2000, one study estimates that two-thirds of the employed workforce in the US will be working in education/knowledge/information-related jobs, while manufacturing, commerce and industry will account for only 22 per cent and agriculture for 2 per cent. In 1920, 9 per cent worked in information/knowledge/education jobs, 53 per cent in manufacturing and 28 per cent in agriculture.[15] But the lines between these categories are blurring as the knowledge component in each sector increases. In a report on high-tech tractors, a modern farmer was quoted as saying: 'Farming you used to do with your back; now you use your mind.'[16]

The impact on labour

Concretely, new technologies affect the labour market in different ways. Forester identifies four 'causes of concern' regarding the impact of high technology on jobs. These include the fact that (1) traditional manufacturing jobs (e.g., in automobile and steel production) are disappearing, and will never come back; (2) new manufacturing industries will not create many new jobs, because of automation; (3) there are doubts about the capacity of the service sector to create any more new jobs, and (4) the high-tech sector itself, even though it might grow, will create only a modest number of jobs.[17]

Under capitalism, one of the primary reasons for introducing new technology is to reduce costs (towards maximising profit), including labour costs. The greater the savings, the greater the incentive to innovate. Robotics and numerical control technology enable firms to eliminate high-paid production jobs. In a recent interview, Heidi and

Alvin Toffler describe a new factory in Israel. It 'is a cutting-tool factory that doesn't have a single worker in it. Even machines get their parts from a robot that goes from machine to machine and resupplies them.' What work is done is that of moving information around by 'technical specialists' or that of helping the products circulate by 'working in book-keeping or in sales'.[18] The Next computer factory in Fremont, California, 'requires only five manual-assembly workers and fewer than a hundred other workers, mostly engineers, for a line capable of producing $1 billion of computers a year'.[19] Better data access and analysis, as a result of computers, improved telecommunications and networking, enable firms to eliminate middle-management positions also. Digital telecommunications, improved transportation technology and modern manufacturing methods enable the globalisation of production and the labour market. This makes it economically feasible to transfer work that can be moved, like manufacturing (as opposed to work that cannot be moved, like personnel services) to cheaper labour markets, and, at the same time, squeeze domestic wages. Recent figures from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that the same number of people will be employed in manufacturing in 2000 as in 1970. This means that the number of people employed in manufacturing, as a percentage of total employment, will shrink from 24 per cent in 1970 to 14 per cent at the turn of the century. From 1970 to 1988, however, manufacturing output has remained a steady 20 per cent or so of the GNP, while the output, in constant dollars, has grown by more than 50 per cent. Other figures indicate that, over the last ten years alone, one million manufacturing jobs have disappeared in the US. In 1970, the average weekly earnings (including overtime) for private industry production and non-supervisory workers was $298 (expressed in 1982 dollars); in 1989, it was $264, an 11 per cent drop.[20] Fewer manufacturing workers are producing more and, in general, making less.

At the same time, a relatively small, well-paid, knowledge-rich (highly-skilled) section is still eagerly sought after by firms. 'Not all parts of the labor market are shrinking. Engineers and technicians are still in demand, depending on their specialty, even at companies that otherwise are paring workers.'[21] The working class is splitting into a well-paid section that works in capital-intensive design and production work, and a larger, relatively low-skilled (or no-skilled) section consigned to work that is too expensive to automate, with an ever-widening gulf between the two.[22] The polarisation of income has been dramatic. A recent *Business Week* article points out that 'it's only those in the top 20 per cent who show a respectable gain in real incomes over the 15-year span'. The bottom 60 per cent have seen their incomes drop, while the richest 5 per cent have seen their income grow by 60 per cent and the richest 1 per cent have seen rates of growth twice that.[23]

Whole sections of the US population are being cast out of the sphere of production. The 'cast-outs' are neither consumers nor producers; they are not even needed as a 'reserve army of the unemployed'. Drugs, disease, illiteracy, homelessness or prison are their lot. 'High-wage slavery is being replaced by low-wage slavery. Low-wage slavery is being replaced with no-wage slavery – people who work without wages, but who are "paid" in survival coupons.'[24] The members of this latter group are marginally maintained by society through shrinking welfare payments and food stamps, and are forced to earn their meagre keep through modern versions of slavery like workfare and prison labour.[25] The 'cost of production' of marginalised workers exceeds their usefulness as labourers – in the logic of capitalism, they are people with no value.[26]

The well-paid, knowledge-rich section of the working class is by no means immune from the pressures on wages and 'redundancy' originating in the information economy. For example, behind the drive for object-oriented programming (OOP) – a technique for writing programming code that is easily reusable rather than every time having to make up functions from scratch – is the need to cut costs and raise productivity by bringing software production techniques at least to the level of the interchangeable part – something achieved in industrial production 150 years ago. A *Business Week* editorial argued: 'There's already evidence that object-oriented programming can help corporate computing departments reduce the outlandish amounts of money and time spent on creating their own programs. This could spell substantial savings, since corporations now spend most of their information technology budgets on software – about 60 per cent more than they spend on hardware, according to market researchers.'[27] The next technological step beyond OOP is computer-aided software engineering (CASE), which could bring software production up to the electronic age, by having computers themselves write the software.[28]

The current recession has pummelled the electronics industry as much as any other. IBM has announced that an additional 20,000 jobs will be cut in 1992, on top of the 20,000 cut in 1991. IBM will have eliminated 75,000 jobs – almost 20 per cent of its workforce – since 1986. Some 90,000 jobs were lost nationally in the electronics industry during the year ending in September 1991.[29] The mini- and mainframe computer companies like Digital, Bull, Wang, Burroughs, Tandem, Amdahl and IBM have been victims of the rapid 'downsizing' (the replacement of large, old computer systems with small, cheap, more powerful systems) in hardware and software driven by new technology and the recession.[30] Under the euphemism of 'restructuring', workers in these technology firms are being cut loose, ironically, in part, because of even more powerful computer technology.

There is also no reason why data entry, computer programming or

data analysis cannot be done in low-wage areas like India, Ireland or
eastern Europe, with the product of the labour, computer code or data
transmitted instantaneously electronically to customers on the other
side of the world. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article described how
data processing and other 'back-office work' is being moved offshore
to cheaper labour markets. And it is not only low-skilled data entry
work that is moving.

> Wright Investor Services has 85 employees in its Shannon (Ireland)
> office. Most of them are young financial analysts earning less than
> the equivalent of $20,000 a year organizing financial information
> from companies around the world for Wright's databases. That is
> far preferable to hiring American business school graduates at
> $45,000 ... It is precisely these kinds of higher-level jobs – financial
> analysts and technicians – that the Irish government is trying to
> attract. And much the same can be said for Jamaica, Singapore and,
> for that matter, many US communities. So the future may bring
> intensified worldwide competition for these high-skill computer-
> based tasks.[31]

The article goes on to describe how software developer Quarterdeck
employs twenty workers in Ireland to field nearly 1,000 technical
support calls a week. During the day, calls are handled by the US staff,
'but after hours, the head office [in California] throws a switch and the
calls are routed automatically to Ireland'. Intercontinental Software in
Palo Alto, California, founded by a Bulgarian emigré, brokers well-
trained but relatively inexpensive East European programmers for
American firms seeking to lower software development costs.[32]

Conclusion

Knowledge costs almost nothing to duplicate, especially if it appears
in digital form. As a greater percentage of goods become knowledge,
the nature of production as resource-exhaustive, labour-consuming
and scarcity-bound becomes obsolete. The new productive forces are
resource-conservative, yet generate an abundance. 'Ownership' be-
comes an irrelevant concept if many people can possess the same thing
simultaneously. Property rights as we have known them simply get in
the way, and hold back development. The holding back takes many
forms: incompatible standards that needlessly complicate learning new
skills and sharing information; unnecessary and wasteful duplication
of research and development; expensive lawsuits, ultimately paid for
by the consumer, over ownership of interfaces; increased surveillance
to catch 'information pirates'; decreased access to public information
as databases are privatised and information is commodified; skewed
priorities as profitability and not social need is the determining factor

in research, development and distribution of knowledge; and even the criminalisation of knowledge itself as it is classified as weaponry, lest it get into the wrong minds.[33] Society is harmed, and social development is held back.

With fewer jobs and lower wages as a result of the new knowledge-intensive forces of production, the circulation of commodities in exchange for wages becomes impossible. Wages are simply not high enough nor extensive enough to absorb the productivity of the economy. Private property laws separate the destitute worker from the means of survival. So apartments sit empty, while homeless people sleep in doorways or in prison-like shelters.[34] Food sits in warehouses or is destroyed, while children suffer from malnutrition. Illiteracy rates climb, while teachers are laid off. Meanwhile, the capitalist scrambles to protect his position by locking up knowledge, by looking for new areas to commodify and convert into sources of profit and by further revolutionising production. More workers are laid off, or jobs eliminated through 'early retirement'; this only exacerbates the crisis.

A. Sivanandan describes the revolution in technology as 'emancipating' capital from labour.

> The more Labour tries to hold Capital in thrall by withholding its labour, the more Capital moves towards its emancipation through yet more information technology, yet more labour-less productive regimes, yet more recourse to the captive labour force in the periphery. The relations of production, that is, have changed with the changes in the level of the productive forces: information (in the sense of data fed to computers, robots, etc.) increasingly replaces labour as a factor of production; Capital no longer needs living labour as before, not in the same numbers, in the same place, at the same time; Labour can no longer organise on that basis, it has lost its economic clout and, with it, whatever political clout it had, whatever determinacy it could exercise in the political realm ... And that is what moves the terrain of battle from the economic to the political...[35]

The problem becomes not how to produce wealth, but how to distribute it. As such, the struggle is not around wages, or job security per se – economic struggles – but around property relations and social relations, around the social contract and social convention of ownership, around social control and survival – political issues.

A syndicated article by Robert Lewis appeared in November 1990, in the *San Francisco Examiner* (ironically, in the employment want ad section) with the headline 'Will the age of the robots produce a workless society?'

Imagine a society where material needs are provided by 'smart'

machines, where people manage to break the link that equates self-worth with a job and are able to live comfortably from the fruits of robot labour...

Computer scientists Hans Moravec of Carnegie Mellon University and Kalman A. Toth, founder of the Silico-Magnetic Intelligence Corp., predict robots will be commonplace in 10 years. In 50 years they say, robots will have replaced most if not all human labor...

Experts say the widespread entry of robots into the workplace could raise living standards unlike any invention during the industrial revolution. But if robots indeed are able to take the place of human labor, critical questions arise.

First, how should the wealth produced by enterprises operated with robot labor be distributed to those who don't work or who work part time? Toth says he envisions that non-workers would receive 'citizen pay' on a basis that would have to be worked out.

Between people's needs and the immense productivity of the knowledge economy stands a system of property relations. These relations are historical – 'private property', as a social convention, developed, not without much struggle, during the beginning of the capitalist period in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such a system of property relations was required for private ownership of means of production, and the protection of newly acquired wealth from both the feudal powers and the emerging 'propertyless' classes.

There is nothing 'natural' about property rights, nor are they universally recognised.[36] Rather, they are conventions struggled over, formally and informally, by various social forces. Different sections of society respond to these developments in different ways. Among the most destitute sections of society, it takes the form of struggling to open empty HUD houses to the homeless, to distribute food in government warehouses to the hungry, or to provide liveable welfare grants by raising the taxes of the wealthy.

Marx and many other writers have pointed out that social relations must eventually correspond to the level of productive forces. We now live in a time when productive forces have raced far ahead of social relations. The knowledge-intensive productive forces are straining against the chains of private property relations. The qualities of knowledge, to be fully maximised, require a system based on co-operation and sharing, because cooperation and sharing generate more information and social wealth. Such a system would emphasise education, because education builds the infrastructure for expanding social wealth. Such a system would require the distribution of goods on the basis of need, because the cost of production eliminates scarcity and wages. This, of course, is a radically different system. Then again, the technology we use to produce goods now is radically different.

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26 N. Peery, at a talk given in San Francisco (21 February 1992).

27 'A great leap for software – and business', *Business Week* editorial (30 September 1991).

28 This process is no different from earlier efforts to break the power of skilled production workers. The automatic spinning mule, the cylinder textile printing machine, and the wool-combing machine all undermined the power of specific skilled textile trades. See G. Barsalla, *The Evolution of Technology* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 111.

29 'Thousands of electronic jobs vanishing', *San Francisco Chronicle* (4 December 1991).

30 'Both Tandem and Amdahl make large computers. That segment of the industry has suffered as customers move computing tasks to networks of inexpensive desktop machines.' 'Two computer makers report first-ever losses', *San Francisco Chronicle* (24 January 1992).

31 'American firms send office work abroad to use cheaper labor', *Wall Street Journal* (14 August 1991).

32 Describing a recent arrangement between a Russian computer design team and US computer manufacturer Sun Microsystems, the *New York Times* reports: 'The [Russian] team's full-time effort will come at an astoundingly low price for Sun. Its members will be paid a little more than their current salaries of a few hundred dollars a year in American dollars ... Top American computer designers sell their services for $100,000 a year or more, but both Sun officials and Mr Babayan said the Russians on the new team could not be paid that handsomely without engendering bitter feelings among their colleagues or causing inflation in the Russian economy ... Other high-technology companies are searching for similar windfalls.' 'Russian computer scientists hired by American company', *New York Times* (3 March 1992).

33 The Boston 3 case is a recent example. Three engineers who were active in Irish support (one of them with high security clearance from the US government) were variously charged with conspiracy over the export and manufacture of bomb-making materials and conspiracy to 'injure and destroy' a helicopter base in Northern Ireland. Despite a massive surveillance operation against them, which unearthed no weapons, bits of weapons or designs for building weapons, they were found guilty. In effect, the evidence against them amounted to a combination of their technical knowledge, some 'off-the-shelf' pieces and bits of wire, and their political affiliations. Knowledge, when combined with political conviction, now seems to be sufficient grounds for prosecution and conviction.

34 According to US census figures, some 7 per cent of US housing is vacant. San Francisco, with an estimated homeless population of 6,000 to 12,000, has 22,000 vacant housing units (*San Francisco Examiner*, April 1991).

35 A. Sivanandan, 'All that melts into air is solid: the hokum of New Times', *Race & Class* (Vol. 31, no. 3, 1990).

36 A.W. Branscomb, 'Property rights in information' in B. Guile, op. cit.

JEREMY SEABROOK

Biotechnology and genetic diversity*

The article which follows is based on the work of three individuals who have received awards from the Right Livelihood Foundation. The Foundation, which receives no government or institutional funding, was set up in 1980 by Jakob von Uexkull, a translator, journalist and stamp-dealer, to recognise outstanding contributions in the fields of peace, sustainable development, environmental integrity, social justice and human rights. Since the inception of the Foundation, its awards – sometimes known as 'alternative Nobel' prizes – have been given to over forty individuals and groups, out of 250 submissions from more than fifty countries.

The work of Cary Fowler and Pat Mooney, who together won the award in 1985, has been largely concerned with the world food crisis and the erosion of the world's genetic resources. Fowler and Mooney have worked together since 1975. One of their proposals was the establishment of international seedbanks, which was adopted by the UN in 1985. Their book Shattering: the diversity of life in the age of biotechnology *was published in 1989 by the University of Arizona Press. Since 1978, they have worked for the Rural Advancement Fund International (RAFI), a small, non-profit organisation which focuses on the socio-economic impact of new technologies on rural societies. RAFI played a major role in stimulating the creation of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Commission and Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources and*

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*the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources. Since the 1988
publication by RAFI of* The Laws of Life: another development and the
new biotechnologies, *RAFI has been developing a study/action pro-
gramme dealing with the impact of biotechnology on agriculture, food
processing, basic community health, and the threat of biological warfare.*

There has been at least one more important consequence of the new
confidence gained by the West from the decay of the socialist threat.
The West can more readily pass off the novelties of its technology as a
fresh source of hope to the poor. Like all previous economic miracles –
intensified industrial farming methods, high-yielding varieties, wonder
fertilisers and omnicidal pesticides – the most recent object of promo-
tion, biotechnology, also promises to deliver people from hunger, want
and disease.

One of the cruel ironies of this new technological escape route from
the consequences of our own actions is that it is itself, in part, a
response to the damaging technologies of the Green Revolution – the
loss of the soil's productive capacity, the forfeit of genetic diversity, the
spread of monocultures and the dependency of farmers on increasingly
expensive inputs. Those who now advocate the liberating potential of
biotechnology claim that it will 'give humanity greater control over
nature than anything that went before', thereby revealing the baleful
cultural tradition in which it will be deployed, and demonstrating the
persistence of the damaging myth of human 'dominion' over the earth
and its inhabitants.

The danger from biotechnology is not that it is an act of hubris that
threatens to modify creation, but that it will be used in a context where
it can only exacerbate existing injustice. What could provide humanity
with a real opportunity to relieve suffering is likely to become yet
another weapon in the armoury used to oppress the poor while, at the
same time, exposing the world to unforeseeable, grievous risks. Pat
Mooney, of the Rural Advancement Fund International, says: 'People
who believe that we should not interfere with the integrity of creation
should not, by their own argument, eat corn (or maize), because this is
a human-created crop. It would not have existed in nature without
human intervention. In fact, agriculture itself is wholly artificial.
Thousands of hectares sown to one variety is artificial to nature...
Nothing has changed the environment more than agriculture. The
smokestacks have done nothing to the world compared to what
agriculture has done. But few people find agriculture abhorrent.'

At this stage, the biotech companies, and the transnationals that
operate in close association with them, are keen to stress only the
beneficent outcome of their work, particularly in the areas of medicine
and food. After all, they say, laboratory-made human insulin already
protects many diabetes sufferers, and interferon is effective against

certain cancers. But it is now possible to breed plants and animals for their most desirable characteristics and, in the laboratory, changes can be achieved in a fraction of the time required in the natural setting. Genes can be added to crops to help them resist blight, disease, mildew, insects, nematodes, drought or floods. The implications for productivity are not difficult to see. At the same time, bovine somatropin, a naturally occurring hormone, can now be more cheaply created in the laboratory, and could be used to produce monster cows, capable of 'giving up to 45,000 pounds of milk products' a year. Pigs, with the addition of a human hormone, may have their fat content reduced by four-fifths. Microbes have been created that will decompose toxins in water, clean up industrial effluent and devour oil slicks. There is every prospect of creating nitrogen-fixing maize, of yield increases of 500 per cent for oil-palm and cassava, and coconut palms capable of giving 1,000 per cent more by means of cloning.

It goes without saying, as Cary Fowler and Pat Mooney point out, that such intensive production could be sustained only through the artifice of extremely high-cost inputs of energy, fertiliser, pesticides, medicated feeds, hormones, antibiotics and capital. Among the more visionary possibilities unlocked by biotechnology is the idea of a 'green cow', one into the cellular structure of which plant chloroplasts have been introduced, so that it may use the energy of the sun directly, without the intermediate process of continuous and costly grazing. Something similar might even be possible for human beings, thereby, at a stroke, solving the problem of world hunger. In the long run, the creation of transgenic species is not ruled out technically: some have spoken of soldiers as ferocious as wolves, or labourers of bovine strength and placidity (although the projection on to mute beasts of these wholly human characteristics probably renders any such exercise a priori redundant).

Resistance to the abuse of biotechnology has been conspicuously undertaken by Fowler and Mooney and their associates at RAFI. Indeed, they have drawn up a model draft law for countries to regulate the development of biotechnology.[1]

At this point in its development, biotechnology remains strictly a private enterprise. As long ago as 1980, the United States Supreme Court decided that micro-organisms could be patented under existing law. The Patent and Trademark Office considered 'non-naturally occurring organisms, including animals, to be patentable subject matter'. Creation thus comes close to being regarded as the equivalent of manufactured goods: life can be *owned*. The first genetically altered animal, a mouse, was patented in 1988. It was given the patent number 4736866. In the same year, the Patent Office decided that farmers who buy or breed transgenic livestock must pay royalties to those companies holding the patents. The struggle was carried forward at GATT

and the World International Property Organisation (WIPO) over changes to international conventions that would 'industrialise' biology. The right to ownership by private entities of genetically engineered material is strongly contested. Much of that material is based upon the genetic richness of the South, freely given to the North as part of the human heritage. The modification of crop plants and the resale of them to their countries of origin at high prices demonstrates the tendency of biotechnology to intensify structural injustices, already exacerbated by the Green Revolution.

Pat Mooney traces the debate on patenting.

'We've always owned cows and dogs. Life has always, in that sense, been owned. But here, we see the processes of life can be owned, even a human characteristic, just as a plant characteristic can. It began with patenting fruits and flowers in the United States in the 1930s. When people said "That's patenting life", the answer was "No, we're just patenting fruits and flowers, they're just ornamentals, it's not significant. We'd never think of patenting food crops or anything like that." So the patent law was passed in the 1930s. Then in 1970, the companies came back and said "We want to patent vegetables and cereals", and people got upset about that. The answer was "We're just patenting the plant breeding material, we're not patenting food products: no one's patenting peanut butter, just peanuts." By 1978, people were saying "Let's patent the end product of breeding" – the example they gave was cut flowers. "We'd never patent food." But now, you can patent food, you can patent peanut butter. But people still said, "We don't want to have the patenting of animals, of course, or any higher life-forms." Then in 1987 they patented the first mouse.

'It's gone up and up. You now have so many species with human genes in them. No one wants to say that they are patenting human beings. And, of course, you cannot define human beings genetically very well. But if you take so many genes and stuff them into so many other things, as we joke in *Development Dialogue*, "How many genes do you put into a pig before it starts to read the menu?" Ultimately, you'll allow for the patenting of human organs that are genetically created, perhaps livers in a test tube that can be put into stock for liver transplants. That will be very positive, but there'll be a patent on it. After that, the same will happen with other organs. No one's going to patent a human being, but we may well be filled with patents inside us. They'll cure us of genetic diseases, they'll prevent them. Then we'll be paying royalties on ourselves. "The royalty we!" We'll be licensees of a life industry.'

These lessons are not lost on the transnationals. Petrochemical and pharmaceutical companies which made such killings (not all of them metaphorical) through the Green Revolution, with fertilisers and pesticides, clearly felt threatened by the prospect of genetically

engineered superstrains that might bypass their products. This is why, in recent years, they have been buying up seed companies, a process closely monitored by RAFI. In 1987, the Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) became one of the top ten seed producers. Between 1968 and 1988, Shell bought over 60 seed companies, Pioneer Hi-Breed 39, Ciba-Geigy 26. For them, this marks a logical extension of their control over the global food-chain. During the 1980s, Monsanto shifted from capital-intensive to knowledge-intensive activities, moving into 'life sciences' – agriculture, health care and nutrition. The chairman of Occidental Petroleum stated that 'food resources in the nineties will be what energy resources were in the seventies'. As well as the pharmaceutical and agrochemical companies, the major food processors, such as Unilever, Nestlé, Heinz, Philip Morris, are also moving into biotechnology, which may prove a crucial background for control of the world's food supplies. Squeezed between them are the poor farmers and consumers. Anwar Fazal, president of the International Organisation of Consumers' Unions, observes:

> Some 40 per cent of the world's manufacturing is based on biological materials. This 40 per cent is bound to be affected by the technology transformation. Whole industries are involved, and millions of human beings will have to experience the effects. Concomitantly, power structures will be transformed and the rules of the power game changed. We already experience new systems of blackmail and corruption at the global level by governments in order to get their way. Biotechnology is a new, powerful tool on the way to controlling the world.

Simultaneously, the same transnational corporations have been increasingly investing in universities, financing research, and even whole departments. The possibility of commercial invasion of places of learning is often presented as a desirable marriage of 'the real world' with the cloistered seclusion of academic life. Fowler and Mooney fear that, over time, the integrity of the scientific process could well be threatened by these developments.

Pat Mooney has monitored the logic of the growing concentration of power over which the TNCs are struggling. 'You can use plants or livestock as producers of drugs. There is the example of melanin, a human pigment, which can be bred into plants, soybeans or wheat, so that when you harvest the crop, the grain will go to make bread, but from the other part of it – the straw – you extract the melanin; so there are two harvesting purposes, one for food and one for drugs. Another example already in operation is with cow's milk: you take tissue, plasminogen activator, a human hormone, which is inserted into the genum of mice and then cows. It is extracted from the milk in increased quantity. You're using the animal as a bioreactor, to be the factory for

your drug. It's very cheap. The pharmaceutical companies say "We should buy food companies, as well as the pesticide companies, which already have the seed companies."

'Then you come to the next level of extraction, whereby life becomes a matter of the control of information. DNA is a matter of genetic information, the DNA code is a code for life. Monitoring that information is a computer's task; so at the end of the day you have the drugs companies owned by the informatics companies, the IBMs and Siemens of the world, because it is that manipulation that is crucial. But then the response of the drug companies is that the real winners may be the life insurance companies, because life insurance is seen as a bargain, a bet between a company and an individual as to who knows best how long you're going to live. So the drug companies will propose that at birth the child's cell-line would be taken (a sample of the DNA of the child, which is replicated in each cell), and that would be analysed, and the company would say to the family, "Well, here are the various dispositions of the child towards certain diseases, and we can breed drugs specifically for that child from the child's own cell-line, ready for when the child comes in danger of contracting these diseases. We can develop flu vaccines, cold vaccines, from the child's own cell-line, multiply it in a wheatfield, in a cow, in the belly of an insect, who knows." So the drug companies are looking at the possibility of buying out the life insurance companies, so they'll have a wide capital base to guarantee the life insurance for the child, because they will know what the bargain is.

'This is why you see all the mergers between pesticides and seeds, and between pharmaceuticals, pesticides and seeds, and, in the last few years, the food-processing companies. And all the time, the size of the companies gets bigger: the average size of a seed company is less than $100m in sales; of pesticides, $1bn-$2bn. The average pharmaceutical gets you into the range of $4bn-$10bn; and when it comes to food processors, they have between $10bn-$20bn. So the scope is still vast: information, DNA, which is just another form of information, can only intensify the mergers.

'There are other threats in the development of biotechnology, particularly to the countries of the South. Farmers and their products are more and more threatened with displacement by means of genetically engineered, laboratory-wrought substitutes. One response to the charge that the rich world exploits the basic commodities of the poor has been the effort to create replacements which will render certain primary products superfluous. Such nature-identical substances can eliminate the livelihoods of millions of small producers. Of course, the development of technology has always and continuously displaced earlier patterns of production and reliance on natural materials; but the scale and intensity of present possibilities scarcely promises to set

the poor free. If the 1980s saw falling prices for cash crops push more and more small farmers towards the edge of survival, the coming decades may see the total elimination of whole areas of traditional production.'

One of the best known substitutes already on the market is thaumatin, a sweetener, indeed, the sweetest substance known. Derived from a fruit grown in the rainforests of West Africa, it is imported to Britain from Ghana and the Ivory Coast by Tate and Lyle, and marketed as 'talin'. Talin is now being produced in laboratories through recombinant DNA technology. Similarly, factory-made vanilla threatens the income of some 70,000 farmers in Madagascar, which exports three-quarters of the world's vanilla. Clonal production of oil-palms vastly increases productivity, but, at the same time, lowers world prices. This jeopardises the living of small producers, who cannot afford the costly inputs, and it enhances the power of plantation owners and those companies which have patented the new strain of oil-palm. The vegetable-oil market is now worth around $35bn a year. In the same way, the production of artificial cocoa-butter from inferior oils threatens to undermine a major export commodity of cocoa beans from several countries, including Ivory Coast, Ghana, Brazil, Malaysia, Nigeria and Cameroon.

Although the biotech companies insist that their laboratory tests are safe, and that field tests are rigorously controlled (some even include a 'suicide gene', so that any micro-organisms that escape into the wild automatically self-destruct), it is difficult for governments to legislate, when even the law-makers themselves are not always aware of the dangers. The worst possible occurrence would be what Rajni Kothari, publisher of *Lokayan* in New Delhi, calls an 'ecological holocaust', as a result of the narrowing of the genetic base of the world's crops. Varieties that are part of the common heritage of humanity are being privatised, the property of powerful interests concerned with the promotion of profitable monocultures. Biotechnology may lead to even swifter genetic erosion than occurred through the Green Revolution.[2]

Some of the transnationals, far from creating crops that resist disease and pests, are simply modifying them so that they become tolerant of their own brands of pesticide and herbicide. Ciba-Geigy markets its own brand of sorghum wrapped in three chemicals, one of which is to protect the seed from its own herbicide. It is, apparently, easier to change the genetic make-up of crops than it is to cause any mutation in the inherited characteristics of the system of commerce.

Public debate of these issues has been stimulated by RAFI. Without such work, 'discussion' would be conducted remote from those (all of us!) whose lives are going to be transformed, behind our backs and beyond the reach of democratic control. Those struggling for the

preservation of genetic diversity, and for the people's right to control it, are resisting the entry of the ugly neologism 'bio-imperialism' into the language of domination.

The attachment of Fowler and Mooney to diversity is passionate. Indeed, they make explicit the connection between *crop* and *cultural* diversity. The wide varieties of traditional seeds were integrated with human cultures. Festivals and religious ceremonies were based on sowing, flowering and harvesting, embedded in cultures, language, thought and worldview. Fowler says: 'We have altered the environment to suit the seed, rather than allow the seeds to develop out of the environment.' He points to the precise policy commitment of the United States, which led to the eager promotion of the Green Revolution, with the consequent loss of diversity: 'Of course, there were humanitarian reasons also, but US aid programmes pressured governments in the Third World to use high-yielding plants to produce more food as a means of stopping the spread of communism. This led to food productivity, increased quantity, but fewer varieties.' How strange, that fostering one form of monoculture should have been considered an appropriate instrument to halt the spread of another!

Fowler sees the removal of more and more human beings from food production for their consumption as the beginning of loss of control over their lives. Certainly, this is borne out by the testimony of peasants and subsistence farmers at the point where they are forced to abandon the growing of food. I remember a meeting with some farmers on the island of Langkawi in Malaysia, whose rice fields had become silted up because of tourist development in the hills above their padi fields: Pak Long Kassim, a man in his 50s, said: 'When you grow your own food you are free. How is a boy dressed in a uniform behind a hotel counter more free than a man who cultivates his own land? The last harvest a piece of land yields is a pocketful of dollars. After that, nothing. It becomes barren.'

Fowler says that the 'promise of biotechnology is that it can increase productivity more dramatically than anything has ever done before. But Third World farmers have been breeding new crop varieties for 12,000 years; Northern scientists work on genetic material for ten years, make a minor modification and are hailed as geniuses. And they "own" the "property" thus created. We are proposing a compensation mechanism for the Third World, and a conservation mechanism for genetic material, farmers' rights to balance plant breeders' rights. A fund has been set up under the auspices of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation. We want contributions to be made compulsory. The South needs justice, not charity. A recent international conference, sponsored by the Keystone Foundation, was held in India, and it endorsed the concept of a mandatory fund of $3bn-$5bn a year, to be paid by nations which are recipients of germplasm from the Third World. The genetic diversity of the USA is far smaller than that of

many other parts of the world; in spite of this, 85 per cent of all the varieties of apple in the USA have become extinct within a century. And, by selling back seeds to the genetically-rich areas of the world, diversity can be wiped out there, too, very swiftly.

'We have organised village-level conservation systems and regional international conferences. Both levels of work are needed. We were surprised at how quickly the United Nations structures were set up, and by the fact that some of the people we had been fighting have come round to see the importance of what we say. It may, however, be too little, too late. We have such a short time to gather material before it becomes extinct. And it must be protected in situ. Material stored in gene-banks becomes unusable, seeds fail to germinate, the material is spoilt. How can you save old seeds, unless you can find ways to save the old cultures which produced and protected them?'

The linking of cultural and natural diversity in this way suggests a quite different relationship between the social and natural order from that which dominates the industrial paradigm. Cary Fowler insists that we are now at the end of the era of chemical agriculture. 'The question is, do we have the resources to reconstruct agriculture in an ecologically and humanly sensitive way? We give plants junk food, bad air, acid rain, and expect them to be healthy. Is it any wonder that cancer is one of the great scourges of the modern world, when what we eat has been abused in this way? We have already narrowed the genetic base of many crops. Indeed, some crops have been rescued from pests that would have destroyed them only by the use of wild genes – tobacco, sugar cane, tomatoes would not be grown commercially today but for the genes of their wild relatives.

'The question of crops also impinges upon peace issues. The possibility of biological warfare against crops is a real one – you could destroy the economies of some countries by wiping out a single plant. Simply invade it with pests that will ruin the crop – coffee, bananas, cocoa – in some African or Latin American country, and it would be crippled.'

The work of Fowler and Mooney gives new resonance to the words of Hannah Arendt, who wrote in *Between Past and Future*: 'Without testament, without tradition – which selects and names, which hands down and preserves, which indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is – there seems to be no willed continuity in time and hence, humanly speaking, neither past nor future, only sempiternal change of the world and the biological cycle of creatures in it.' Even that biological cycle, it seems, can no longer be taken for granted.

* * *

Melaku Worede was a Right Livelihood Award winner in 1989. He was

born in Ethiopia in 1936, and has spent his life as an agronomist. He obtained a PhD in Agronomy in Nebraska, and returned to Ethiopia, where he became involved in the planning of the Plant Genetic Resources Centre in Addis Ababa, of which he became director in 1979, a post he still holds. Ethiopia is one of the world's eight 'Vavilov Centres', noted for their great genetic diversity. This diversity is now under threat from drought and modern farming methods. It is this biodiversity that Worede has sought to preserve, and, going beyond this, to establish 'Strategic Seed Reserves' of traditional seeds that can be released to farmers for planting in times of drought, when no other seeds thrive. He regards local farmers as crucial partners in the conservation programme. Melaku Worede is also vice-chair of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's Commission on Plant Genetic Resources.

Resistance to the malign effects of monoculture is today being strengthened in the South. Dr Worede speaks of retrieving the pride and dignity of Ethiopia, by restoring self-reliance.

'It is a pity that Ethiopia should be seen as hopelessly poor, viewed as a basket-case, when in fact, it ought to be a bread-basket. We have a rich biological and cultural heritage which benefits the whole world. Seventy years ago, a scientist called Vavilov was travelling in Ethiopia by mule, and he surveyed or collected mainly cultivated food crops, and he designated Ethiopia as one of the areas of the world of greatest genetic variety. But, until recently, we didn't know how to tap these resources. Some of our diversity was stolen from us. But now, we are in a position to safeguard our own interests. Other people saw us sitting on a bag of gold and crying, and they thought, "These are fools", so they took what we had, and used it for their own interests.

'For example, twenty or twenty-five years ago, scientists came here to explore plant-types, and they took some varieties of sorghum high in lysine, which is deficient in most cereals. The high-lysine gene was the only known source in the world. Our farmers knew a variety of sorghum by a name which in Amharic means "milk-in-my-cheek". Farmers in Wollo had recognised its value, and its highly nutritious properties. That gene is now widely used in all sorghum; but we could have used it to improve our own nutrition status. Many people have come here, taken materials which they subsequently work on and patent, and we find ourselves buying back the seeds. With bio-technology, the technique for genetic engineering exists in the countries where the diversity does not exist. They are keen to trap resources, which they then convert into monopolistic products. In our case, given the absence of the technology, the logic is to save and protect our resources first.

'We are dealing with three levels of diversity – genes, species and ecosystems – which co-exist in an intricate symbiosis. We must halt

extinction, and give priority to saving species, land ecosystems and natural habitats. The immediate question is how to maintain diversity, and, at the same time, make progress in agricultural development.

'Genetic erosion occurs for a number of reasons: the displacement of native cultivars by introduced new varieties, which are not necessarily adapted to the conditions in which they must grow, and are not very stable, but are superior in yield given high inputs, in terms of fertilisers and pesticides. The second main cause is the destruction of natural habitats, where not only cultivated crops exist, but also the wild resources, the gene-pools. The wild relatives are often completely ploughed under, because of plantations, monocultures, or because of deforestation or drought. The most significant issue now is drought. Drought has always been there, but it was very serious in the early 1980s; traditionally, farmers would always keep something for security, but what happened during this severe drought was that, as food grain came through relief agencies, some farmers were consuming the seed they had conserved for next season's planting. We intervened in time, and prevented this happening, because if they had used the relief-grain for planting, they would have become dependent upon the high inputs which they could not possibly have afforded. Because famine was always here in Ethiopia, by tradition farmers would bury their seed, and disappear from the place struck by famine. Then, three or four years later, some member of the family would return and claim it, and use it for seed again. That was how they saved the germplasm, not only for Ethiopia, but for the world. Those were the original gene-banks. It is not only nature, but our farmers, especially women farmers, who are bankers, born bankers, because they selected the seeds and adapted them to ecological realities.

'The West sees our precious and irreplaceable genetic resources as *raw material*. Many breeders, scientists, in the West have never seen the landraces, the folkseeds as the farmers see them. To them, landraces are something you select from, for immediate use, and then throw the rest away like garbage. We need to keep control over our own resources. That is one reason for the establishment of the Plant Genetic Resources Centre. We have had 48,000 accessions of seventy-two crop varieties in ten years. We have been able to mount a nationwide rescue operation since 1985; we have collected extensively, covering all crops in all ecological zones; not only food crops, but medicinal and industrial ones too.

'We are now developing our own indigenous capacity. This means that agronomists, experts, breeders, must now take a holistic view, educate themselves by tapping and recording local farmers' knowledge and skill, and seek, with them, a point of entry into crop improvements.

'The discussions within the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources have led to the campaign for the recognition of the informal

innovation systems of indigenous peoples. This concept should be introduced into the appropriate fora, including the World Intellectual Property Organisation, the Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties, and the GATT negotiations on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Systems. It should be recognised that economically and socially valuable experiments are going on all the time, in unofficial and cooperative systems that are not recognised by existing intellectual property regimes. These were developed to acknowledge the contributions of western, largely private or corporate processes of formal innovation. Third World farmers have always selected for certain characteristics, taken note of, and conserved mutations in their crops. In effect, they have always been plant breeders. They preserve biological resources in situ. This resource-base must be salvaged and enhanced. They are not living museums, but offer resources that can be developed for long-term food security. It is a dynamic process, evolutionary, not the passive storage of genetic material. Western gene-banks depend on finance from big companies. These simply isolate what they need now, and throw the rest away. A lot of potential is lost. If biological resources are protected in their habitat, variations will continue to develop, but the benefits from evolution in the environment may occur only in the remote future. If you simply control resources captured now, they will not represent the potential that exists in nature. You'll have a state of arrested evolution. As well as this, there is a deterioration in material due to handling – a genetic drift – when they are planted outside their natural habitat. There must be balance, the storage of assembled materials for easy access and immediate use, but long-term storage as well. There must be a back-up system which sustains diversity in a dynamic state.

'Over time, there has been a damaging simplification of ecosystems in Ethiopia, the removal of forests to plant crops for cash, overuse of grazing land. When natural vegetation is removed, a chain of events is created, degradation and disturbance, the consequences of which cannot be foreseen. Weather changes, droughts and floods may occur. Conflicts arise out of this desertification, the abuse and deterioration of natural resources. Wars and conflicts should be seen as a result, not a cause, of these things.'

Melaku Worede first became interested in germplasm when a lecturer from Oklahoma visited Addis Ababa to lecture. 'I remember saying to him: "Why don't you give us some of your new varieties, so we can develop our agriculture?" He said: "Drop your bucket right where you are, you have a lot of resources which you should know about. Why do you want our varieties? You have more than we have." '

The relationship between North and South is sometimes inextricably complex. Many from the South have felt themselves and their traditions inferiorised by Northern technology. For alternatives to

make their way in the South, these have to gain approval from the North first, even when the new practice or insight itself originates in the South. Dr Worede was ridiculed when he first initiated on-farm conservation programmes; but the idea gained ground with the support of RAFI and the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada, and is now widely accepted.

Melaku Worede says that, in Ethiopia, there is no clear-cut distinction between cities and farms. 'We never dissociate ourselves from farmers. In Addis itself, you will see farms, people growing things... We are now starting on experiments on farming crops for Ethiopia and the rest of the world in case of climatic change. Drought may make us unable ever to grow certain things again. That is why we must urgently seek out what survives the droughts. We are starting a gene-bank of these things. There is a wild plant that grows on the Somali border, under the driest conditions, less than 200mm of rain a year. It is called *kaga*, a kind of wild rose, a shrub of semi-desert, eaten by people and by goats and used also as a cosmetic. There are other crops, things people have known where to find in distress times. They go to the mountains and pick them and survive somehow... But if you destroy the natural environment of such plants, you lose these resources; and your monocultures won't save you.

'There is food that I remember as a child: we used to dig out certain root plants and eat them, not because we were hungry, but because we enjoyed them. We knew them as famine crops, because our ancestors had used them during the war. Ethiopians have always fought, and the fighters knew where to find the plants they needed. My colleague, Legesse Wolde-Yohannes, and I were born in the same year; and when the Italians were bombing Addis, our parents fled to the same place, the valleys where no tanks could reach, nothing. That was where our parents had come from, and we survived for the first five years of our lives there. Although a lot has been forgotten, beyond the mountains not far from the city, you can still find a lot of the resources.'

The disruption of traditional patterns of farming by drought, war, famine, thirteen years of military marxist rule and forced villagisation has led to changes in eating habits within the country. Although *teff*, the staple, is still eaten everywhere, there has been an increase in bread wheat, as opposed to the durum wheat traditionally grown. In the rapidly expanding city of Addis, with its population of refugees from violence, hunger, civil war and environmental devastation, western-style foods are becoming more conspicuous, especially with the educated young.

*   *   *

I visited Addis Ababa just before the downfall of Mengistu in 1990.

The portraits of Marx, Lenin and Engels had been removed from the ceremonial arches of Africa Avenue, and only a few slogans remained on the archaically futuristic buildings of central Addis: only 'Peace, Solidarity and Friendship' still adorned the Hilton Hotel. Behind the monument to the Martyrs of the Revolution, some redundant metal red stars and giant hammers and sickles were rusting in the bushes.

Outside the *kebele* (neighbourhood) headquarters of one of the most wretched suburbs of Addis, the painted slogan still said 'Scientific Socialism is our Principle'. There are 1,300 houses in this *kebele*, almost 10,000 people. Many of them are recent arrivals in the city; and on every patch of overcrowded space, there are reminders of the rural background, an attempt to grow vegetables, to raise livestock, to keep alive a broken self-reliance. Stony lanes follow the contours of the hills, flanked by houses of nile-green corrugated metal, or wood-frame with mud walls. Prostitutes, some of them only 14- or 15-year-olds, stand in the mid-afternoon sunshine, satin dresses and jewellery incongruous splashes of luxury in the bleak city landscape. They charge 3 *birr* (about \$2) for the room they rent, most of which goes to the men who control them. On the side of the roads, it seems, everyone is trying to sell something: bronze and raven-blue hens in wooden cages, cheese on banana leaves, dried chillies, cloves of garlic, purple onions, grain – maize, wheat and *teff* – in sacks, many of them labelled World Food Programme or Gift of the Government of Canada. The people must be registered with the *kebele*, in order to receive their subsidised rations – *teff* can be had for 70c a kilo, sugar for 2 *birr*. Many sell a proportion of their entitlement at a profit to those who can market it elsewhere. With the money, they purchase some other commodity which will yield them a profit – vegetables, saffron, pepper, or *chat*, the mildly intoxicating leaf that is chewed by the unemployed men on the roadside.

There is more energy in the Mercato, one of the biggest markets in Africa, than anywhere else in the city – a living repudiation of a state control that was already in the process of dissolution. Many traditional artefacts are on sale, material that has not been displaced by mass production. There are baskets and vessels of straw and grass, pottery, horn and metal, agricultural implements, wool and cotton fabrics, including the delicate white cotton *shemas*, the prayer shawls worn by both men and women of the Ethiopian church, to which more than 80 per cent of the people belong. Children of 7 and 8 years old are working, as shoeshine boys, fare collectors in the shared private taxis; some are selling plastic carrier bags, chewing gum or Indian *agarbatti* (incense) sticks. Men hammer pieces of shapeless metal in small fume-filled workshops, skilfully working a panel of an abandoned car or an iron bedframe into utensils, lamps, tools. One man is cutting barbed wire, taken by night from some military installation; another is straightening rusty nails; a shoe-repairer is mending an incredibly

derelict boot. A man sits on a bale of eucalyptus leaves on sale as fuel, embroidering a shirt in an intricate traditional design. Here, the human resources are stretched to their limits. The uneven stones of the streets are shiny with the swirling dust and the bare feet of passers-by. A boy trails the skin of a newly killed goat; from time to time, you come across animal remains – the jawbone of a dog, a dead fowl, some goat-horns. Women are making dishes out of dry cereal stalks that will serve as containers for traditional *injera* (*teff* pancakes). A rusty can on a stick in the earth indicates a distillery where *tela*, made from sorghum, is on sale. Hens, sheep and goats wander in and out of the compounds. Everywhere the children follow us. Half the two million people of Addis are aged under 20. They call out the three words of English they know. These are 'foreign', 'father' and 'money'. An old man picks up a rock, and says that if I am Russian, he is going to smash my head: 'Russians have brought nothing but poverty to Ethiopia. *Tebeda*. Fuck off.'

Everywhere, students are anxious to talk with foreigners, now they can do so without fear of being spied on and reported to the authorities. Dawit, an economics student from Gondar, says that neither the villagisation programme nor the *kebele* system in the cities was designed to help the people, but rather to control them. He points to the children whose clothes are more holes than fabric, the blind women outside St George's church, the leprosy sufferers extending their stumps towards cream-coloured Landrovers bearing the logos of international charities, which dash between government offices and the Hilton and Ghion hotels. He says:

If socialism had achieved anything, it would have given security to these people. Instead it has brought us to ruin. There is nothing like a marxist regime for raising people's political consciousness, even if only because it lets them know what they do not want. One effect of attaching Ethiopia to the destiny of a dying ideology was to make the young people turn to the West, its culture, its system. University students want to listen to Madonna and George Michael, Michael Jackson, Hank Williams. They grew tired of revolutionary Amharic songs about Development through Co-operation or International Proletarian Solidarity.

Dawit says it was a tragedy that Ethiopia should have become the site of an ideological struggle just at the time when it was losing momentum elsewhere in the world.
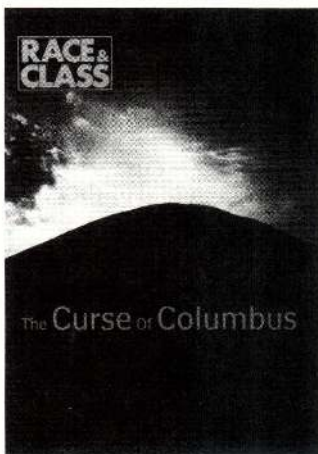
There have always been bitter conflicts between the regions of Ethiopia, but, in the past, the people have always united against external threats – as against the Italians in the 1890s. Feudalism and its overthrow by totalitarian communism have both been disastrous.

And now we can expect the West, with its self-interest and false promises, to take over. How shall we ever recover our confidence in ourselves, our capacity for self-reliance, our own indigenous answers to violence, hunger and environmental breakdown?

References

1   See *Development Dialogue* (nos 1 and 2, 1988).
2   See Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution* (Penang, Third World Network and London, Zed, 1991).

GRAHAM USHER

Palestinian women, the *intifada* and the state of independence:
an interview with Rita Giacaman

While public opinion in the West tries to map the tortuous detours of the Middle East peace process, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are living through their twenty-fifth year of military occupation. For them, the new world order has the same feel as the old world order: accelerated Israeli settlement of their lands, while the powers that be pass off their national rights as 'autonomy', and then proceed to rob 'autonomy' of any meaningful content.

Nothing illustrates this enforced invisibility better than the struggles of Palestinian women. For a brief moment, the intifada *brought these women into view.[1] A number of important, if limited, gains were made. Through an incendiary mix of Israeli repression and a home-grown conservative backlash, these gains have been all but destroyed. The popular committees – often set up and staffed by women to structure and mobilise Palestinian resistance to occupation – have been undermined by Israel's clampdown on all and sundry forms of Palestinian organisation. The severe economic recession in the occupied territories brought about by the Gulf war has hit women's employment no less than men's. And, in education and vocational training, Israel's three-year closure of Palestinian universities has shut off women's central route of educational opportunity, forcing many into early marriage and domestic drudgery. On top of this, a fundamentalist reaction – coaxed by Israel and fuelled by despair of any political solution – has sought to foist a particularly rigid version of Islam on women and their role in Palestinian society.*

Against such odds, any resistance would be laudable, and Palestinian women are resisting – drawing on their own indigenous traditions of

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struggle and organised through a modern, durable and robust women's movement. Born out of the resurgence of both nationalist and grassroots activism, the contemporary Palestinian women's movement assumed its modern form in the early 1980s.[2] By the time of the intifada, *each of the main nationalist factions of the PLO had its own women's committee organising in the occupied territories.[3] With and through the uprising, these grew and increasingly coordinated their activities so that, by 1988 in the wake of the PLO's declaration of independence – a Higher Palestinian Women's Council was formed to develop policy and practice on women.*

The following interview[4] is with Rita Giacaman, who, as well as having written about Palestinian women and conducted research into women's health in the West Bank, has been an active participant in the Palestinian women's movement during its modern period. In it, she discusses the impact of the intifada *on women, the dynamics between gender and national struggles and, especially, the role of a new generation of Palestinian women's resource and research centres – Women's Affairs in Nablus and Gaza and the Women's Studies Centre in Jerusalem. In Rita's words, these projects 'aim to render the invisibility of Palestinian women visible both to themselves and to their society'. The Nablus and Gaza centres, for instance, run courses on social science theory and methodology, computing, English, Arabic writing, Palestinian women's history, as well as specialised studies of women in development, politics and health. Women's Affairs has also started a journal detailing research into women's lives in occupied Palestine, while the Jerusalem Women's Studies Centre regularly publishes its own women's magazine.*

Although Rita is a member of the Women's Affairs steering committee, she is here speaking in a purely personal capacity.

Graham Usher: Could you say something about the origins, aims and objectives of Women's Affairs?

Rita Giacaman: Women's Affairs is the product of a collective consciousness, a certain realisation within the Palestinian women's movement that something must be done to upgrade the level of political strength women have – specifically, it aims to inculcate in women those skills of independent thought and analysis that are necessary to intervene effectively in public life.

In the early 1980s, the Palestinian women's movement consisted of the women's committees along with a stratum of independent, professionally-based women intellectuals. Throughout the decade, we were trying to arrive amongst ourselves at an agenda for women. We tried to define the origins of women's oppression, to untangle the different contradictions that constituted this oppression within Palestinian society. Through struggle and discussion, we came to the conclusion

that there were three sources of oppression: national, class and gender (gender, surprisingly perhaps, was the hardest one to agree). Yet these attempts by the committees to unite around a single agenda for women – an agenda which would enhance our struggle for national independence – failed. Why?

Within the women's committees – although they did mobilise around social as well as political issues – the question of gender remained subjugated to political and national considerations. And this was because these committees were linked, directly or indirectly, to larger political groups in which men were the decision-makers and women, by and large, the executors. So, in the end, whatever these committees did, what determined their action was not necessarily what was in the best interests of women, but usually what was in the interests of their faction. Factional concerns, in other words, overrode women's concerns. So when the *intifada* erupted, women, politically, were disarmed. We did not enter the uprising on an independent political platform, as a mobilising force of the sort that would usually be called a lobby. And the experience of the uprising has forced us – among other things – to engage in a process of self-criticism. We have been thinking about alternative ways of organising. Rather than working through committees, where gender is used as a means to recruit for factional ends, we are convinced that women should enter politics as agents of change, as ideologues and decision-makers in their own right and not just executors. And to do this, women must have a grounding in those skills that make for effective participation in public life. Women in Palestine are wonderful tacticians, but we don't think strategically. Questions of strategy – and hence leadership – are delegated to men. And, of course, we understand why. Not only does our socialisation militate against such intellectual independence, but so does our education system – which is sexist and based largely on didacticism. So, at the end of this period of self-appraisal and self-criticism, we said, 'Look, what we need to do now is recruit women and build with them those aptitudes and skills that will enable them, as women, to be leaders in their own communities.' This is the rationale behind Women's Affairs.

GU: But if this sense of being 'politically disarmed' was a common one amongst women, why couldn't an inclusive agenda for women be agreed amongst the committees?

RG: Because the consciousness that you lack power and the conscious-ness about what you have to do to wield power are two completely different things. The first stage is always a realisation of powerlessness, which, for us, was a very traumatic one because it came under the impact of the *intifada*. It was a stage that all the women's committees went through, but unevenly, not in unison, with different groups

drawing different conclusions as to the root causes of their powerless-ness. And even if all the women had agreed personally – which, of course, they didn't – they couldn't have executed this decision because of their powerlessness within their respective national groups. It is really only this year that not only have all the women's committees agreed in principle on the idea of a women's agenda; more importantly, they have started to debate *how* they can actually implement this agenda, despite the men in their organisations. Which means that the central issue women are raising now is the issue of democracy.

Now, we cannot say that all the nationalist groups are equally at fault in this. But we can say that the problem of democracy – precisely, the lack of it – is a common one in all the factions. Some are inclined towards democratic change, whereas others are set fast against it – which is related to the fact that these factions reflect and espouse the interests of different sectors and classes in Palestinian society. So, for instance, generally you will find that women from the more progressive or radical factions are much more willing to be critical, even confronta-tional, with their men than are women from the more conservative or mainstream factions. There, the problem is often not couched in terms of democracy at all; but rather in terms of women's rights. Let me give you an example.

A few weeks ago, a press conference was called in Jerusalem by a group of Palestinian women on the theme of freedom of expression. This was in response to several incidents where *Hamas*, the main Islamicist movement in the occupied territories, had tried to block cultural events organised by women in the Jerusalem area. A major nationalist figure was invited and agreed to speak at the conference. And he agreed for one very obvious reason. At that time, *Fatah*, the largest and most mainstream of all the factions, was in open, direct and physical confrontation with *Hamas* on the streets of Gaza. Yet, when he spoke, he spoke about freedom of expression, of assembly, etc., entirely in terms of women's individual rights. Another speaker, this time a woman, argued that these issues were not solely about women, but about democracy, and that democracy should be the concern of all sectors of Palestinian civil society – youth, the working class and so on. There was a clear gap, and this gap illustrates the differences that are currently being debated in the Palestinian women's movement, and why the making of an agreed women's agenda has been so hard to fashion.

GU: What, then, is the relationship between Women's Affairs and the national women's committees?

RG: Women's Affairs is independent of the women's committees in terms of their national factions and ideologies. The reason for this is that we have a very strong feminist ideology – *Palestinian* feminist, not

western feminist. Of course, we study western feminism, Third World feminism, etc., but we are in the process of forming our own feminism, suited to our own conditions, having been informed by these other feminisms. However, the majority of our trainees come from the committees. The logic behind this is that while women from the committees may be constrained by their factions, it is not independent, intellectual, professional women who will create change in this society. Professional or independent women are on the margins of society. Our strength lies in our ability to seed new ideas. But the possibility for change – the materialisation of these ideas – rests with the committees, because these are the only mass women's organisations we have. That is why, as a priority, our training goes to the activists of the women's committees' movement.

GU: Isn't there a contradiction between saying, on the one hand, that you want women to enter politics as independent agents and, on the other, that only women drawn from the committees will change society? Doesn't women's involvement in what are factionally-based committees preclude the kind of intellectual independence you say you want Women's Affairs to foster?

RG: I don't think there is necessarily a contradiction. I think there is an ideal. You see, what we seek are independent women who at the same time are established cadres in their factions. But this dual role can only be realised by tilting Palestinian political society in the direction of democracy. The greater the democratisation of the political factions, the more space women will have to pursue the two roles – as supporters of their factions, on the one hand, while being independently loyal to the cause of women, on the other. This is not a play with words. Once women have tasted the flavour of democracy within their factions, and experienced the empowerment it brings, they will become even more open to the idea of equality, not just in relation to themselves, but to other oppressed groups too – to youth, the elderly, the disabled, children. And, of course, ideas of democracy and equality – which are not so developed here – are crucial and contested ideas in the struggle for the kind of Palestinian state we want to build. So, if there is a contradiction in Women's Affairs' philosophy, then it's a necessary contradiction, because as far as I'm concerned the *possibility* of women's liberation in Palestine is intimately tied up with and dependent on the wider issue of democracy. To speak personally: I believe we can only realise a truly independent agenda for Palestinian women if we set about forging alliances and coalitions with these other oppressed groups, around these issues of democracy and equality. Because then we will have laid bases of mutual trust, understanding and support. And we need their support.

GU: Couldn't you be charged with elitism? You say that the strength of Women's Affairs – made up of independent women intellectuals – 'lies in its ability to seed new ideas' and you have talked about the pivotal ideas of democracy and equality in this project. Can't the women's committees themselves generate intellectuals from within their own ranks?

RG: Well, no one so far has accused us of elitism. In fact, the opposite. In Nablus and Gaza, the women's committees themselves want us to retain our independent status because they feel, at this conjuncture, there is a desperate need for independent institutions like ours. Of course, the Palestinian women's movement produces its own intellectuals. So why is there this need? I think there are two reasons. One, because women appreciate the work and research we do and, two, because the issues we deal with often arise from the committees themselves. Our role is to assist with clarification, to offer constructive criticisms, but the bases of many of our ideas and strategies derive from the committees. So what, then, is our ultimate purpose? It is to phase ourselves out. For example, the plan in Nablus is that within the next three years the existing specialist staff will go, to be replaced by the women who are currently being trained there, many of whom have a base in the women's committees. Women's Affairs, as it is presently constituted, has absolutely no interest in building an empire for itself. Our task is rather to hand over the running of these centres to our trainees once they become qualified to run them as independent women's research bases.

GU: This independence resides in what you call Women's Affairs' strong commitment to a 'feminist ideology'. How do you counter the criticism which sees the very idea of 'feminism' as inherently western, and so alien and inappropriate to the Palestinian context?

RG: I counter the criticism very simply. I don't care where an ideology comes from. We have learned good things from the West. We have learned bad things from the West. We have learned things from the East. We have learned an awful lot from the women's movement in India, for instance. Knowledge, world knowledge, is always cumulative. To suggest that feminism – the movement for the human rights of women – is inherently western is nonsense. Arab history and Palestinian history is full of occasions where women have taken up struggles to achieve these rights. For us, feminism is an ideology that calls for the social integration of women, and so is part of a wider ideology calling for equality across all spheres and for all sectors of political and civil society. This is an international aspiration and, because it is internationalist, can scarcely be called western or foreign. However – and this is where the confusion starts – if the aspiration is

universal, the terminology isn't. Most feminist discourse is laden with what Americans call 'buzz-words', whose origin and import is often exclusively western and so *read* as foreign. We have had many discussions on this score in the movement. As far as Women's Affairs is concerned, we are against the use of the word 'feminist', precisely because of the western connotations it harbours. Look, we are trying to build a movement which all Palestinian women feel is habitable. We want to involve women from the mainstream factions and charitable societies as much as independent women and women from the progressive factions. If we are going to frighten off a single woman because of a word, then it is better to ditch the word. So, instead of calling our programme a feminist agenda, we'll call it an agenda for women. So what? It is how we agree and define the agenda that is important, not which label we pin to it.

Besides, we are not all out for feminism in the classical western sense, nor for other ideologies, like marxism, for that matter. For us, these ideologies have very definite limits. In classical western feminist theory, for instance, nowhere will you find a serious analysis of the national question. So we utilise feminist concepts, including concepts whose origin is western, but not uncritically, because we have to develop our own theory.

GU: You said earlier that one of the weaknesses of the Palestinian women's movement has been that of strategy. This begs the question of the relationship between the women's struggle and the national struggle. We are now five years into the *intifada*. I think the dominant perception – at least in the West – is that, in the initial phase of the uprising, many gains by and for women were made: quantitatively, in terms of women's participation in demonstrations and confrontations, in the home economy movement, production projects and in the neighbourhood and popular committees. Yet, today, many of these gains have been reversed. Why do you think this has happened? And what can be learned from this period, where massive involvement by women in a national uprising did not lead to any permanent or structural changes in women's position in the national movement?

RG: Well, I wouldn't go that far. I don't know if the *intifada* has created permanent changes in women's position or not. This is a good question, in fact, because the issue of the way in which the *intifada* affected women and their role in society has been a bone of contention amongst us – I'm talking about those of us who have been observing, writing and analysing the situation of women in Palestinian society. Some of us believe that the *intifada* propelled women into public life. Others believe that the uprising succeeded only in provoking a conservative backlash which has driven women back into their homes – to a position worse, in fact, than what existed prior to it. I am one of those

who think that the long-term impact of a phenomenon as volatile and transitional as the *intifada* cannot, now, be definitely ascertained. A fundamental error in analysing the *intifada* – and women's role within it – is to look at it as a homogeneous glob. It wasn't and isn't like that. What happened in the uprising is that several dynamics within Palestinian society were unleashed at once, and the sum result of these contending forces is still unclear.

My own view is that the initial phase of the *intifada* produced circumstances that facilitated an enlarged role for women in the life of Palestinian society. First, because so many of our men were imprisoned, a vacuum of political leadership opened up that enabled women to assume roles and responsibilities that typically had been the preserve of men. Second, in the uprising a public structure emerged around which women could organise and in which they could be active. This structure was the neighbourhood committees movement. Neighbourhood committees – responsible for the provision of education, health, food services within Palestinian communities – were largely the creation of women. They evolved out of and modelled themselves on the women's committees. They were ways of organising that women felt comfortable with, understood well and could manipulate. Third, neighbourhood committees were actively sanctioned by the national leadership. The combination of these three factors enabled women in the first year of the uprising to participate politically in ways that were genuinely remarkable.

However, by the beginning of the second year, and perhaps even earlier, these changes in women's roles brought in their train a reaction. This reaction was most apparent in Gaza. As the politics of the *intifada* became more difficult – as the goals of national independence and statehood grew more distant – people became more frustrated. Islamicist forces utilised this frustration by challenging the nationalists on precisely those terrains where they were at their weakest – the terrains of culture and society. And the way they did this was by grasping the weakest link in the nationalists' political and cultural agenda – the question of women. The vehicle for this was the so-called *hijab* campaign, where women in Gaza were forcibly made to wear some form of head covering.[5] The cardinal error committed then by the national leadership in Gaza, which was made up almost entirely of men, was that it simply did not understand the significance of the relation between the *hijab* campaign and an ideology expressing a reactionary view of women's place in society. In other words, the nationalists could only conceive the Islamicists in narrowly factional terms, and not as a social and political force in Gaza at large. At the same time, the women's movement in Gaza was too weak to be able to wrest drastic action from men and their leaderships. The upshot was that the *hijab* campaign was lost in Gaza virtually as soon as it began.

Attempts were then made to generalise the campaign to the West Bank. But there the women's movement was much stronger organisationally and we had the hindsight afforded by the experience of Gaza to fall back on. I remember incidents in Hebron where women were pelted with tomatoes, eggs, rotten vegetables for not wearing a headscarf. Yet, immediately, these cases were taken up by the women's movement via statements spelling out very clearly the issues involved. These statements, in turn, compelled the United Leadership of the Uprising to release a *bayan* condemning all attacks on women. So, you can see, there are peaks and troughs. We must remember that the fact that the women's movement on the West Bank had the strength and vision to curtail fundamentalist reaction is itself an achievement.

Nevertheless, by the third year of the uprising, it is true to say that the tide was more against than with us. The neighbourhood committees had all but collapsed, largely because of the excessive repression of the Israelis against all forms of Palestinian women's organisation. Incidentally, I believe that women's response to this repression was one of the best examples of non-violent resistance I have ever seen. It was a struggle I will never forget because everybody worked with everybody else, a struggle where all class and gender distinctions dissolved in the face of the common enemy. But the Israelis won. The neighbourhood committees were swept away, and so women lost the prime platform around which they could work in public.

These, for sure, are setbacks. But are they permanent reverses? I don't think so, because, in the course of the resistance women mounted against both Israeli repression and Islamicist reaction, something emerged which is in fact genuinely irreversible. And this was the qualitative change in consciousness these struggles wrought. The *intifada* was such a fantastic example of mass participation and grassroots action for women, such an experience of empowerment, that it is likely that neither the example nor the experience will be forsaken easily. You must remember what an achievement the *intifada* was for us. Neither Palestinian society nor Palestinian politics, historically, had been particularly democratic. We developed out of a peasant society and, for twenty years of the occupation, we were groping towards democratic forms against enormous military odds. Yet, suddenly, with the *intifada*, we were thrown into a cauldron of mass activity where not only were we forced to participate as equals, we were forced to tolerate each other's views as equals. You will agree that participation and toleration are amongst the primary prerequisites for any genuinely democratic practice – often proclaimed, rarely achieved. Yet there we were practising them, against terrible repression, on the ground, as a people.

The situation for women now is one where we have this liberating experience but no democratic means to express and build on it. What

we have, in effect, is a revolution of rising expectations amongst Palestinian women; precisely, a consciousness change. So, while we have gone backwards a step organisationally, ideologically we remain at an advanced stage. The evidence of this manifests itself in ways that are not readily seen because, as yet, it is not concretised in the form of mass action. Rather, it manifests itself in the severe criticisms the women's committees are making of their own national leaderships. It manifests itself in the fact that if you go to the women's committees today, you will hear debates not only about national independence and the peace process, but about democracy, accountability and leadership in Palestinian politics. It manifests itself in the fact that the women's committees – who once took pride that they trained their own cadres – are actually sending many of their activists to institutions like Women's Affairs and the Jerusalem Women's Studies Centre. Why? Because Palestinian women today know that, to go forward, they must acquire a deeper theoretical insight into their own oppression; and, to do this, they know that they must develop from amongst themselves a cadre of organic, independent women intellectuals. In sum, what we have now are the nuclei of critical thinkers. Do not be fooled that because there are forces trying to push us back to our homes, we haven't internalised the difference between then and now. We have.

GU: What, then, strategically and tactically, do you think are the issues to be prioritised by the Palestinian women's movement in the current period?

RG: Well, I can only speak personally, but I have general guidelines in my mind. First of all, we need training. You cannot develop a women's movement with a clear agenda, with agents who can change society, without having them trained and educated. And the problem for us is that the education Palestinian women receive at university is useless for this task. Rather, we need educational projects, courses, workshops that are specifically geared to address the defects in our political and intellectual socialisation. I'm not just talking about technical skills. I'm talking about consciousness changing and systemisation. Insofar as women have problems – and, in Palestine, we have a great many – we must, as women, become problem solvers. To solve problems, you must be able to think clearly. And to think clearly, you must be able to think systematically.

In addition to training, we need information about Palestinian women. We lack primary sources; much of what we have is hearsay. We hear that women are getting married earlier in Nablus, but that they are not getting married earlier in Gaza. Is this true? And, if it is, is it significant? We need to document these phenomena – not just for the sake of collating data, but for political action. You cannot set guidelines for social policy without some hard facts. Once we have our

data – and data culled from everywhere in Palestine, not just Jerusalem – we can determine our political priorities. This is why at Women's Affairs we combine training for research *with* actual research on women. As an institution, we want to generate a body of knowledge that is relevant to and utilisable by women throughout Palestine. Our projects are precisely modes through which practice can update policy which, in turn, will inform theory. Practice, policy, theory can never be taken in isolation. There must be a dialectic between them. This is one of the main lessons we've learned from women's involvement in the uprising. Let me give you an example.

One of the main areas of women's participation in the *intifada* was the so-called home economy movement. We started this both in response to felt social needs – the escalation of strikes and curfews, etc., meant that food was often increasingly scarce – and in response to the United Leadership's call for Palestinian self-reliance as a means of breaking our dependency on the Israeli economy. Yet the net result of this campaign was to ghettoise women even further into their prescribed social roles – as food providers, carers, agricultural labourers, etc. Some of us were aware of this contradiction at the time and pointed it out. Yet, when we did so, we were accused of being divisive by women involved in the movement. And this was because these women themselves saw the home economy movement in exclusively nationalist rather than in gender terms. Now, it appears, the home economy failed: it failed not only economically; it failed because it constricted women in an extremely narrow economic sphere, increased the domestic burdens on them intolerably (because now women had to work in the fields as well as in their homes), took them further from public life and removed them even further from political leadership. Had we reflected a little bit more on this at the time, we could have challenged the self-reliance campaign, developed its theory and renewed its practice in a direction that was gender, as well as nationalist, orientated.

GU: From your criticisms of the self-reliance campaign, it's clear that Women's Affairs is rethinking profoundly some of the strategies advocated by the national leadership in relation to women. How have these criticisms been received by the leadership? And what does the setting up of institutions like Women's Affairs and the Jerusalem Women's Studies Centre signal in this process of self-criticism and appraisal?

RG: If there is a reassessment, then it certainly wasn't initiated by us at Women's Affairs. Its motor has come from the women's committees. As I said, the practice of self-criticism and self-correction is greater now than at any time in the history of the movement. Why? Because women have lived through the *intifada*, because, as you say, women

from the committees are organic to the national movement, and because they know best – they ran the neighbourhood committees, practised the self-reliance campaign, tasted freedom. If they are now reflecting on these experiences, it is because objective conditions are dictating that they have to. What is remarkable today, however, is that these women are starting to feel empowered enough to stand on a platform, make a critical assessment of their own practice and say, 'Look, these projects worked but these projects didn't work. It's time to rethink.' This signals that we, as a movement, have reached a very mature stage in our history because we are able, regardless of our factional loyalties, to air these criticisms with love. All that institutions like Women's Affairs and the Jerusalem Women's Studies Centre can do is offer support, encouragement and a forum for these trends.

As for the national leadership, this, too, is completely out of our hands. How these criticisms are received, how and if they are acted on, depends on the balance of forces between the women's committees and their respective national movements. And this, of course, is determined by struggle. It's not easy for women, but I know they are sounding out their criticisms like never before, and I also know that some of their criticisms are being taken on board. As I said earlier, this process is not uniform, its extent is greater in some groups than in others. But it is happening amongst those people, men and women, who view democracy as a central component of any future Palestinian polity.

GU: Could you say something about the specific research projects Women's Affairs has undertaken, and how these will help develop the political skills and empowerment of women?

RG: First of all, Women's Affairs never decided the kind of research projects the trainees would undertake. We believe that trainees should start their researches from where their consciousness is rather than from where we think it should be. So, the initial projects were on Palestinian women political prisoners or Palestinian women martyrs – the safe nationalist issues. However, as the programme progressed – as the trainees became more adept in social science and methodology – the women themselves began to raise questions about wider social issues. One of the most interesting projects the Nablus centre has carried out was on the position of Palestinian female domestics in the local economy. This was quite a controversial choice in that domestics, especially in Nablus, carry a certain social stigma because their work is associated with prostitution and other taboo occupations. Yet the results of this study found not only that domestics were grossly exploited, but that they were not at all protected by any kind of labour law. On the contrary, we found that Jordanian law actively prohibits domestics from forming any kind of association or union.

Other projects have concerned women's health. In Palestine, up to

now, the only research undertaken on women's health has been in relation to their role as reproducers of children. There has been very little research, for instance, on the health problems associated with commonly used forms of contraception. So Women's Affairs, jointly with Birzeit University, is conducting a study into women's health issues other than those to do with reproduction, and particularly into women's mental health. Why? Because our initial findings reveal that young women, especially those aged between 13 and 22, regard psychological problems as their number one health concern. It's not surprising if you think about it. These young women have lived their entire formative years under the trauma of the uprising. Yet the nature and extent of their hurt, up to now, has almost completely been concealed.

These projects, for sure, are consciousness raising exercises. But they are not just this. They are generating knowledge that, in the future, will be primed for social policy and practice. They are precisely the right tracks for institutions like Women's Affairs to follow because they raise awareness even as they provide an information base that can be utilised by policy-makers when the time comes.

September 1992

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CHRIS SEARLE

Cricket and the mirror of racism

If popular sport can become the mirror of the attitudes within a society, the reporting of it in a press which itself poses and parades as 'popular' can make that reflection even more lucid.

This was illustrated with powerful truth during the English summer of 1992, by the way in which the British press reported the cricket test match series between England and Pakistan. Coverage of this major sporting event grew to a frenzy during the last days of August. As Mike Selvey, the cricket correspondent of the *Guardian*, put it, it was 'the biggest witch hunt in the game' for thirty years.[1] So much so, that in parks and on cricket fields all over Britain, Pakistani cricketers – schoolboys and men – became the targets of crass sniggers and insinuations about being 'cheats' and 'ball doctors' as they went about playing and trying to enjoy their national game, or simply picked up a cricket ball in order to bowl.

All through the summer, Pakistan's brilliantly effective pair of fast bowlers, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, accounted time after time for the English batsmen with bowling of exceptional skill and outstanding late swing.[2] The response from a battery of British sports journalists was an attempt to undermine their achievement by labelling them as cheats and covert rule-breakers. This journalistic campaign came to a climax on 26 August, when England cricketer Allan Lamb – who had been born and bred in apartheid South Africa but who had

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qualified to play for England from 1982 onwards and had played seventy-nine times during the following decade – launched an attack on Wasim and Waqar in the mass circulation *Daily Mirror*. He accused them of cheating and transgressing Law 42.5 of the Laws of Cricket by 'doctoring' the cricket ball by scuffing it up on one side, so as to increase its capacity for late and prodigious swing in the air in unexpected directions. Under a banner headline proclaiming them the 'cheats of Pakistan', Lamb's article claimed that Wasim and Waqar 'gouge the damaged ball with their nails, then smear the surface to fool the umpire',[3] cosmetically covering up the cracks and tears they have made in the leather by smoothing them down with their sweat.

With the *Mirror* cricket correspondent Colin Price writing that 'Pakistan's cheating cricketers fly out of England today – as free as birds',[4] implying that they had done something that warranted their being detained, and a *Mirror* editorial writer declaring that there should be some kind of deportation order issued against them – 'The Pakistan team should be drummed out of England in disgrace'[5] – a storm of hostility broke across the British tabloid press. The *Mirror* led the attack, proclaiming Lamb a hero and insulting the two Pakistani bowlers in particular, dressing them down as scoundrels and cheats who will be remembered 'by many for their tricks and tantrums'.[6] On it continued, day after day, in words and pictures. 'It's just not cricket!' exclaimed the caption on a Griffin cartoon in the *Mirror* of 27 August, portraying Waqar, with pliers and screwdriver stuck inside his belt, bowling a gouged-up ball to an English batsman, which swings in all directions and ends up chasing two terrified pigeons.

From the *Sun* to the *Mirror*

This was not the first time that the British tabloid press had mounted a campaign of hostility against Pakistani cricketers and cricket officials. In December 1987, after an angry on-field conflict had developed between Mike Gatting, the English captain (who was to lead a 'rebel' tour of South Africa during the winter of 1989-90, reportedly earnt £200,000 for his work and finally got a five-year ban from test cricket as his reward), and Pakistani umpire Shakoor Rana (called by the *Sun* 'the crackpot of Karachi') during the Second Test Match at Faisalabad, *Sun* journalists had pitched in, leading a tirade of abuse and invective, labelling the umpire as a cheat. This chorus had continued for several days, with a *Sun* editorial complaining that 'our boys out there are being cheated left, right and centre by the Pakistanis'. A banner headline screamed 'Pak yer bags!' and, after the tour was completed, the leader writer commented: 'Thank God the tour of Pakistan is over at last. If our cricketers never want to see the bloody place again, who can blame them?'[7]

The *Sun* had exercised a malevolent leadership over the story, building in and extracting as much racist content from it as it could, and inflaming anti-Pakistani feeling among white readers in Britain with relish. Now, in August 1992, it seemed that the tawdry mantle had been passed to the *Mirror*, which had learned from its rival's methods during the course of the circulation war being waged between the two dailies. Certainly, in the space that it devoted to the 'doctoring of the ball' story and the way it set out purposefully to pillory Wasim and Waqar and lionise the eager Lamb, the *Mirror* was doing much more than merely emulating its gutter-mate.

The *Mirror* had already foreshadowed its methods in the treatment it gave to the 1991 West Indies cricket tour to England. At the tour's outset, Colin Price had written a back-page headline story claiming to be 'a damning verdict on the West Indies'. The huge letters proclaimed 'Accused', with, under portraits of the Caribbean cricketers, the words: 'They are the most unpopular team in the world. Their game is built upon vengeance, violence and arrogance.'[8]

These words had been taken from an article in *Wisden Cricket Monthly* (which claims to be, as a part of the legendary 'Wisden' tradition, a revered source of authority to cricket-lovers) by its Australian editor, David Frith. The *Mirror* reprinted almost all of Frith's caustic article, which was a follow-up to the hostile and vituperative campaigns waged by the British sporting press against West Indies touring sides of previous years, when their own phenomenally fast and skilful bowlers, like Malcolm Marshall, Curtley Ambrose, Michael Holding and Joel Garner, had consistently devastated brittle English batting (as Wasim and Waqar were to do in 1992). In 1987, on the West Indies' previous tour, the *Sun* in an editorial had told the Caribbean cricketers to 'Stay away. Permanently.' It had attacked them for supporting an international ban on cricketers who had boosted the apartheid system by playing in South Africa.[9]

The *Mirror*'s 1991 attack on the Caribbean players centred upon their captain, Viv Richards, who was accused of gamesmanship, intimidation and being 'at the very centre of the war-dances'. The 'serious' papers, too, had their daggers out, with the *Guardian*'s Matthew Engel attacking the Antiguan for his 'assertions that Caribbean cricket represents black aspirations', which, Engel claimed, had 'caused great offence' to Caribbean people of Indian descent in Trinidad and Guyana. Biting deeper, Engel went on to condemn Richards for his consciousness of history, complaining to a predominantly white readership that Richards

seems to be carrying the whole burden of history on his shoulders. You might think he blames every white man he sees for the deforestation of Antigua for sugar cane (which makes it horribly drought-

prone) and what Sir Christopher Codrington, the chief local slave-
owner, might have done to his great-great-great-great-great-
grandfather.[10]

What is noteworthy, in retrospect, about the 1991 reporting is the
way it is echoed in the 1992 columns, with the *Mirror*'s vanguardism in
the attacks on the Pakistanis being reinforced by the 'heavies' –
including those newspapers like the *Guardian* with reputations for
liberalism and 'fair play'. The *Mirror*, unlike the *Sun* (which is an
avowedly Tory newspaper, bringing the Conservative racist message
unambiguously to British working people), proclaims itself a 'Labour'
newspaper. And yet, as this latest attack on Pakistani sporting success
and achievement shows, its treatment of such issues reflects a similar
jingoism to that of the *Sun*.

'National character' and British press racism

For those who regularly read the sporting press in Britain, particularly
the *Mirror*, the declining days of the 1992 cricket season were redolent
with the portrayal, in banner headlines, of 'the guts of Allan Lamb',
plus other stories continually reiterating the 'guilty-by-cheating'
accusations against Wasim and Waqar. In a speech bubble super-
imposed over a full-page colour photograph of both Pakistanis in the
Mirror of 31 August, they are shown exclaiming: 'It wasn't me – it
WASIM!' The story was dubbed by Colin Price as 'the great Pakistan
ball-doctoring scandal', even though no evidence beyond Lamb's
accusations was ever brought forward as proof. Despite the *Sun*'s
hostility towards its arch-rival, the *Mirror*, it, too, was not slow to
make a hero and a martyr out of Lamb. 'Good on yer Lamby!' it
announced in its 'Sunsport' editorial of 27 August, adding weight to
Lamb's claim by its own characteristic abuse of Pakistan as 'a bunch of
ball-gouging cheats'. The previous day's edition had included an
interview on the controversy with Bob Willis, another ex-captain of
England, who seemed to reach his own ugly conclusions, not only
about Pakistani cricket, but about the Pakistani national 'character'
too:

> It's just the way the Pakistanis are brought up to play their cricket.
> It's the nature of the beast. Everything is confrontational. They
> don't say sorry willingly and don't often accept they are in the wrong
> … it's not part of their character.[11]

These judgments, leading from comments on cricket to declarations
about the 'national character' of Pakistan, were not limited to the
tabloid press. The *Guardian*'s Michael Henderson, in his column of 10
August, took the words of the internationally respected cricket

commentator, John Arlott, that 'cricket reflects the personality and spirit of those who play it, and by extension, illuminates the national character', and twisted them to his own ends by adding that 'all summer long the Pakistanis have been wilful, capricious and hot-headed'.[12]

The conception of cricket as a form of culture which expressed a people's uniqueness and strength of creative development was, of course, one entertained by great cricket writers like Neville Cardus and C.L.R. James. In *Beyond a Boundary*,[13] James luminously showed how Caribbean cultural and political resistance, the consolidation of regional unity and confidence, and the determined opposition to racism had been fused around cricket in the campaign for, and final selection of, Frank Worrell as the first black captain of the West Indies cricket team in the late 1950s. But what was being expressed about the Pakistanis in these peevish judgments by English ex-cricketers and journalists in the British press was a national caricature, not national character. They were seen to be condemning not only Wasim and Waqar, but the entire Pakistani people – including the large, English-based community which was on the receiving end of increased racist violence in the streets and estates of Britain's inner cities. For, as Ian Wooldridge – typifying the press response and writing in the *Daily Mail* – declared, the 'volatile' Pakistani cricketers had provoked an affair which 'hangs like an ugly thundercloud over a team, a *nation* and a game of presumed integrity (my emphasis)'.[14] It was unlikely that such a press was going to condemn its own provocateurism and baiting of the Pakistani team and its so-called 'national character'. One writer took this to an extraordinary socio-biological level by moving from national character to national perspiration – concluding that what made the crucial difference with Pakistanis were 'the certain properties in their sweat which achieve a superior polish' when their bowlers shine up the ball on their cricket whites to gain extra swing.[15]

Fighting back, and other voices

The Pakistanis were not slow to defend themselves against the British press's own 'presumed integrity', and answered the vituperation with a combination of rectitude, pride and disappointment. Wasim and Waqar were clearly saddened that out of their own English team-mates – with whom they had played on a day-in, day-out basis during previous seasons in Lancashire and Surrey, respectively, and with whom they had achieved notable success in the English County Championship and one-day competitions – none came forward to defend them or said anything to dispel the ugly accusations. 'Both Waqar and I have played a lot of county cricket and nothing has been said about our bowling until this summer. Why is that?' asked Wasim,[16]

who continued by saying that he believed the accusations were moti-
vated by racism and colonial rivalry. 'They taught us cricket', he
added, 'but now that we are winning, England are bad losers.'[17]
Intikhab Alam, ex-captain of Pakistan and now manager of the
international side, asserted: 'Our achievements this summer have not
been tainted by these allegations. We have far better bowlers, everyone
accepts that. These stories are all rubbish.'[18] Of Lamb's accusations, he
continued: 'I think this is a very cowardly attack', and, suggesting a
build-up of racism behind the South African's actions, added, 'There is
something behind this, I don't have to spell it out – it's very obvious.'[19]
Yet the mere accusations seemed enough to goad Lieutenant-Colonel
John Stephenson, secretary of the International Cricket Council, the
controlling body of the game, to declare, blimpishly: 'We are deter-
mined to stamp out this sort of thing!'[20]

In the wake of the chorus of bitterness against Pakistan's cricket,
however, new evidence began to emerge and new voices to make
themselves heard across the cricket establishment. The Australian ex-
test match batsman, Bob Cowper, who had been match referee for the
first two test matches of the summer between England and Pakistan,
was tracked down holidaying in the French Alps. When asked for his
opinion on the controversy, he gave it unambiguously: 'During those
games I personally examined the balls after each session of play. None
had been tampered with. I have no explanation why Pakistan's fast
bowlers can consistently get an old ball to swing so much. They just do.
Maybe,' he added with a smile, 'it's because they're very good bowlers
indeed.'[21] Simon Hughes, a county cricket circuit veteran now playing
for Durham, came clean when he wrote that 'the reverse swing
phenomenon is not a new discovery', adding that it had been used
regularly by the great Pakistani fast bowler, Imran Khan, all through
the 1980s. 'He used various fingertip skills,' wrote Hughes in the
Independent on Sunday, 'some of which he demonstrated, others he
guarded. One of these seemed to be to manoeuvre the quarter seam so
it acted like a rudder, pulling the ball in the different direction it was
intended.' Almost from nowhere, the creative genius of Pakistani
cricket and its ability to improvise new skills for new conditions was
being acknowledged and 'discovered'. Hughes went on to say that one
of the blue-eyed young men of English cricket, Angus Fraser, regularly
scuffed up the ball while bowling, and that 'the secret of this whole
issue is to avoid discovery. At all levels of English cricket, slip fielders
have lifted the seam, so much so that at times you might cut your
fingers on it. There are several first-class players who have imparted
oily substances from their clothes on to the ball, and one team used
non-scented talcum powder.'[22] The hypocrisy behind English cricket
and its press guardians came teeming out.

Imran himself came forward in the *Daily Telegraph* to describe,

quite concretely and without defensiveness, the reverse swing technique – explaining it as a response to the specific conditions of pitches in Pakistan. 'We in Pakistan have been practising it for years', he declared:

> Our grounds are hard and our wickets bare. Consequently the ball gets scuffed up within a few overs. There is no great secret to it. Once the ball is rough and one side is dampened and polished, then the ball will swing towards the polished side, as opposed to the conventional way in England where it swings opposite to the polished side.[23]

Such techniques of dampening the ball with natural sweat and polishing it to create a shine on one side were, of course, entirely within the rules of the game and used by weekend, school and club cricketers the length and breadth of England (and regularly by the present writer too!). As *Guardian* writer Mike Selvey had already written in his report of the Fourth Test Match on 10 August:

> There is nothing sinister in all this. If fast bowlers are to be a force in Pakistan, where the conditions reduce the new ball to the texture of a pair of Hush Puppies in the space of a dozen overs, they need something more than seam or Cherry Blossom shine that English greenery and fertilised outfields maintain here. So, necessity being the mother of invention, Sarfraz Nawaz in the seventies devised a method of lending bias to the ball – in the manner of a bowling wood – by using sweat and spittle to soak one side. The process was refined by Imran Khan and now has been perfected by Wasim and Waqar.[24]

What also began to emerge – beyond a gathering understanding of the Pakistanis' creative abilities to confront and overcome cricketing problems within their own environment – were plain facts that showed that other international sides were themselves tampering with and damaging the ball to help their bowlers, long before the victorious Pakistani team was reviled by the British press in the summer of 1992. In 1990, for example, New Zealand medium-pace bowler Chris Pringle bowled out Pakistan in a test match and had admitted to shredding the leather cover of the ball with a bottle top that he had secreted in the pocket of his cricket trousers.

The truth emerges

Finally, even the *Mirror* and Colin Price – the main protagonists of the controversy – had to admit, in the paper's banner headline of 1 September that 'They're all at it!', quoting the words of Sir Colin Cowdrey, chairman of the International Cricket Council, with stories of the England team itself being reported to test match umpire John

Holder in 1991, for scuffing up a ball during the previous summer's final test against the West Indies. The English test batsman David Gower revealed in his autobiography[25] (which was hurried into publication during the week following the outbreak of the controversy) that he had complained about the Indian bowlers 'scuffing up' the ball during the Oval test of 1990, when he had scored an unbeaten century. Now, even the motives of Allan Lamb, who, as Mike Selvey had written, had enthusiastically taken on 'the mantle of the protector of cricketing morals', were at last put to question, with Scyld Berry of the *Independent on Sunday* suggesting that the South African's eye was 'on the main chance', and that although he might appear to be martyring his own cricket career, his ambition was, in fact, to represent his country of birth, now being allowed back into the international cricket arena.[26]

Throughout this affair, Mike Selvey of the *Guardian*, writing with the breadth of understanding of his great predecessor, Neville Cardus, was the one British cricket journalist who appeared to appreciate that cricket, like any other popular cultural activity, is dynamic; that it changes according to conditions and the ways in which the most talented and creative players can respond to those conditions. English players had learned to lift the seam of the ball to cause it to deviate sharply off grassy wickets; the technique learned and adopted by the Pakistanis was much more applicable to hard, virtually ungrassed surfaces. Now the latter technique had been successfully applied to English conditions by Wasim and Waqar. The additional factors included their sheer pace, with the ball coming towards the batsman at the speed of 90 miles per hour, their devastating use of the 'yorker' which came swinging in, bouncing towards the batsman's toes, the clever variability of the pace of their bowling and their outstanding accuracy. All this made their fast bowling the most accomplished in the world. They were simply the best.

It also took some honest letters-to-the-editor, published right across the political spectrum of the British press, to put the truth of the matter most cogently. Writing to the *Daily Telegraph*,[27] R.E. Hargreaves of Cumbria exposed the hypocrisy of the English county game by showing how nobody from Surrey or Lancashire (the English county sides that Waqar and Wasim play regularly for) had complained of their techniques when both bowlers had achieved outstanding results for them during previous seasons. He also quoted from the cricketing 'Bible', *Wisden*, whose 1992 year book had included a statement from the Surrey county coach, Geoff Arnold, attributing Waqar's success to his skill in using the shiny-rough contrast of the older ball and to a 'greater ability to swing the ball late and at a faster pace – not to mention landing it in the block-hole – more than anyone I have seen'. Keith Flett, an irrepressible letter-writer who writes at least a letter a day to

British newspapers, wrote to the *Morning Star*: 'England cannot stand being beaten by a former colony and when they are, accusations of cheating begin to abound.'[28] And Tawhid and Nahid Ahmed, writing to the weekend edition of the *Daily Jang*, the high-circulation Urdu daily read widely by the Pakistani community in Britain, reinforced this argument: 'They could not face it that a country which is very much hated by the English, actually beat them at their own game.'[29] But then, as a CARF correspondent pointed out, England had 'learnt on the playing fields of Eton' how to 'keep on changing the rules so that you keep on winning'.[30]

But, by the time such reflections were being published and the truth behind the controversy was being revealed, forcing its way through the prejudices of the tabloid journalists, the damage to Pakistanis living in their homeland, and living in a new homeland in England, had already been done. A British mass circulation newspaper (and this time a self-proclaimed 'Labour' one), for the second time in five years, had led a scurrilous, vicious and subliminally racist campaign against the Pakistani people, choosing that people's national success in sport against their old colonising power as its vehicle. And, during that same summer, within six weeks of one another, three Asian men had been murdered, the victims of racist violence in Britain – Ruhallah Aramesh in Thornton Heath, Ashiq Hussain in Birmingham and Rohit Duggal in Greenwich. At the very same time that the 'ball tampering' controversy was being stoked up in the *Daily Mirror*, with its millions of white readers, another Asian youth was shot at point-blank range and blinded in one eye by a racist gang in Harrow, north London, and a mosque, a Sikh temple and a Hindu gurdwara were fire-bombed and attacked in south London.[31]

The specific relationship between such ugly and murderous racist behaviour and its encouragement through distortion, invective and racist targeting in the populist sports journalism of the national tabloids may be impossible to determine accurately. But that it lends its weight to further acts of violence and malice by those goaded by twisted headlines and simplistic jingoism is as evident as it is pernicious. For such journalism is a mirror of daggers.

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KWAME KARIKARI

Africa: the press and democracy

Next to 'multi-partyism' and 'human rights', the 'freedom of the press' is one of the principal objectives of the movement for political reforms that is emerging in Africa. The current wave of struggles aims at establishing the political conditions that create the atmosphere for unfettered operation of an independent press: that is, mass circulating periodical publications owned by private individuals or groups independent of the state or political parties, and providing information and views independent, critical of, alternative or contrary to those of the state.

The stampede to set up private newspapers, either as organs of organised political forces, or as independent instruments of agitation and critical expression, has been most dramatic in 'Francophone' Africa, a region with a poorer tradition of African-owned press business. In some countries, like Burkina Faso, Niger and Congo, which have an even shorter history of indigenous newspaper proprietorship, we are witnessing the foundation of a new institution.

Benin – where an 18-year-long one-party rule throttled one of the longest traditions of a pluralistic press system in the 'Francophone' region – is an example of the excitement to publish. According to the Ministry of Information and Communications, forty newspapers and magazines have come out since the popular upheaval began in 1989 leading to the overthrow of the one-party dictatorship of Mathieu Kerekou. Mali, which is emerging from three decades of successive one-party and military authoritarian rule and concomitant media

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system, is, within two years, suddenly brimming with fifteen news-papers and other periodicals.

In some places, the assertion of the right to publish manifests itself more in the content of what is now printed than in an increase in the number of newspapers. Newspapers permitted to operate under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) in Ghana survived either by avoiding critical commentary and coverage of controversial issues, or by concentrating on lottery, sports, sex and mysticism. In the second half of 1991 – the PNDC's tenth year – an important corollary to the movement to restore multi-party constitutional governance is that these same four-page yellow tabloids are now printing what used to be forbidden.

Undoubtedly, significant progress has been made. But there are more struggles to wage than victories won when regimes (for example, Ghana) retain restrictive press licence laws; the reign of silence remains unshaken (for example, Malawi), and violent repression of the press and journalists continues under intransigent authoritarian rulers (for example, Cameroon and Kenya). Many African governments still use restrictive statutes promulgated under colonial rule such as laws on sedition, official secrets acts and press laws – to tame or silence the independent press. Even Nigeria's appreciably permissive atmosphere is prone to unpredictable punctuations of crude and arbitrary state violence, a constant exposure of the fragility of the press's independent existence there.

Looked at overall, the situation of the press in Africa is yet another index of the continent's underdevelopment. The familiar political constraints of authoritarian control aside, economic and cultural factors seriously inhibit the growth of the press as an indispensable institution for the development of pluralism in political and public affairs.

With the passing of each decade, Africa's press capacity wanes. There were 220 dailies in 1964; the number decreased to 179 by 1970, and, in the mid-1980s, UNESCO recorded 137, with several countries having none.[1] As for the urban-centred and elite orientation of the press noted by observers in the first decade of independence, this has hardly changed.[2] Of Benin's current forty publications, only three are published outside the capital Cotonou. Among Ghana's thirty-odd newspapers, only the longest-running, the *Pioneer*, comes from outside Accra. Circulation figures graphically show that the papers hardly reach the 'common man': none of Nigeria's top eleven newspapers and magazines reaches 100,000 circulation figure per edition; Kenyan and Zimbabwean papers do better comparatively – the Kenyan *Sunday Nation* averages 170,000, while Zimbabwe's *Sunday Mail* sells 154,000.[3]

There are hardly any newspapers (besides some of the party press) devoted to popular social forces such as workers, peasants or peasant

and working-class women. Very few national trade union organisations, for instance, publish regular newspapers. And the few established trade union papers that do exist come out of state or party-controlled labour organisations. Thus, the independent press in Africa, even as it struggles to re-emerge from the shadows of authoritarianism, is, by and large, an elite institution. It can be argued that, therefore, both the state-owned and privately-owned independent papers represent different and sometimes contending sections of the political and economic elite.

Economic factors

Rising levels of illiteracy, high production costs and weak advertising revenue explain principally the low circulation and underdevelopment of the independent press. Benin's forty papers compete for their potential readership among the 28 per cent literate of the 4.5 million population, most of whom are unemployed most of the time.[4]

An *Index on Censorship* survey of the press in four West African countries described the Gambia as an example of how a low literacy rate in a small population severely hampers the viability of the press business, even when the political climate is favourable. Gambia's 500,000-plus population, with some 20 per cent literate, 'means that the possibilities for newspaper publishing are enormously restricted in terms of the size of the potential readership. This is borne out by the absence of a daily newspaper in the country, and by the low sales figures of the "independent" papers, none of which sells more than 700 copies of any issue.'[5]

Likewise, Senegal, despite its larger population and relative lack of restrictions, illustrates the economic threat to the viability of the independent press.[6] The five regular and principal independent papers – *Témoin, Wal Fadjri, Cafard Libre, Sud Hebdo* and *Le Politicien* – are all weekly and published in Dakar. None has an average circulation of more than 10,000 per issue. None has its own printing press; instead all are printed on the presses of the monopolist National Imprimerie du Sénégal, owned by the same French company that prints *Paris Soir, France Soir* and *Figaro* in Paris. Distribution is monopolised by the Agence de Distribution de la Presse which keeps a commission of 36 per cent of the sales. Three of the papers cooperate in joint imports of newsprint and the sharing of printing costs. All but one of the five are enterprises run by journalists' cooperatives. It is a typical case of the business class shunning investment in the press, even where political conditions are favourable. Staffing levels are very low, each paper using a high proportion of part-time staff, a practice quite common in Benin, Congo and elsewhere, where the better qualified staff on the state-run papers provide the part-time input.

A significant, though complicated, lesson from Senegal is that economic necessity has driven the independent press back into the arms of the state: a parliamentary arrangement provides subsidy in the form of loans to independent papers – in 1990, they received CFA10 million.

The financial difficulties of the Senegalese press largely stem from the extremely low levels, or near absence, of advertising revenue, the principal prop of modern newspaper business. It is the bane of the private press across Africa and is basically attributable to the fundamental weakness of the economies, as highlighted by low capital investments and constant shrinking of incomes and consumption capacity, which discourage expansion in advertising. What advertising exists there caters for the small urban markets, and a few billboards and the state-owned press, radio and television are enough for that.

An important political dimension to the problem is state interference or the fear of it. The experience of Dakar's *Sud Hebdo*, articulated by its editor-in-chief, Mamadou Oumar Ndiaye, is universally instructive:

> No business, no corporation, no state-owned company would buy ads in the paper. Why? Most of the people who run state institutions, or even private business, are afraid to appear to be supporters of ill-thinking people. The nature of the state in Africa is such that, whatever situation you are in, you still have some sort of links, and you are to some extent dependent on the state. So that you constantly fear retaliation. Even foreign business organisations have the same attitude. Because, in Africa, the state is the single largest contractor.[7]

By contrast, the situation in Nigeria is one of relative economic success. But its potential is still hampered by such factors as high illiteracy, a national economy chafing under international monopoly controls, poor telecommunications and transport infrastructure, high production costs, high unemployment and low incomes among those who might patronise newspapers.

Moreover, the rapid growth in private investment in the Nigerian press resulted from particular economic and political conditions. The post-Biafra war oil boom accelerated the growth of the national capitalist class significantly and it must account for the expansion of private press investment in the 1980s. The expansion of education and increase in literacy rates, improvements in road transportation and telecommunications, all a result of the oil boom, were favourable conditions for press development. Even so, the federal and state governments own more of the daily newspapers than do private investors.

Press ownership

The sordid record of state monopoly over the media has provoked widespread rejection of state participation, particularly as regards the ownership of the press. But a few commentators do not only consider this unavoidable, they even propose retaining some measure of state control – including licensing – because 'if a citizen requires a licence to run a clinic or a pharmacy or practise as a lawyer, doctor or run a beer bar ... what is so terribly wrong with a man obtaining a licence to establish a newspaper?'.[8]

Countering the two extreme positions – absolute private or state monopoly – is a caution that 'a wholly privately-owned press' is untenable in Africa's situation:

> This is a very materialistic and capitalistic approach that has no validity in developing societies where information is seen as a social asset whose acquisition should enable people to form intelligent opinions about social issues. Anything, therefore, that is done to provide people with as broad a range of views as possible to enable them to reach rational conclusions, and thus contribute to national development, is justified. Market forces alone cannot be expected to provide this broad range of views in the African situation.[9]

This position argues that, if individuals without a popular mandate can establish newspapers, governments, too, have as much right to disseminate information by their own means. The problem is how to develop 'a situation in which the government could operate its own media system, while guaranteeing to individuals and other groups the right to establish their own systems and providing the necessary facilities and creating a favourable environment for the private sector'.

In more blunt terms, the political bureau, set up by the Nigerian government in 1986 to collate views on the country's political debate for constitutionalism, rejected outright a call for privatising the existing government-owned media of mass communication. In the words of its report:

> Privatising government-owned mass media will essentially mean passing these media to private, wealthy and powerful individuals. The interests of these individuals are not synonymous, and indeed are usually diametrically opposed, to those of the people. The fact that privately-controlled media have often been vociferous against certain government policies and other issues does not mean that their primary reason for this is safeguarding the interests of the general public.[10]

When one takes into account the weak capital base of indigenous entrepreneurs in many countries, the slow returns from investments in

the press, and all the other economic factors hampering such enterprises, it is questionable if private investments alone can satisfy the newspaper needs of most countries.

Apart from state involvement, foreign capital remains the major alternative source for entrepreneurship in the press in the short or medium term. But it raises political questions of the type which originally provoked the demand for a New World Information Order – whether the cultural and ideological interests of the African peoples can be served by the cultural agencies of the imperialist powers.

In any event, such foreign investors are likely to be the monopoly transnationals already operating in Africa, or the transnational media conglomerates already present in, for example, Kenya. That would surely not create an 'enabling environment' for the development of the indigenous independent press institutions required to enhance pluralism in Africa. For, the development of the culture and the institutions for democratic expression assumes, first of all, that such institutions are indigenous in origin and character, since democracy can neither be imposed nor exported from outside.

Moreover, with the wholesale adoption of World Bank/IMF-sponsored structural adjustment programmes premised on eliminating state participation from economic activity and on opening up the continent for expanded and intense foreign economic intervention, the involvement of foreign capital in the mass media would simply follow on as the cultural-ideological corollary of this phase of neocolonial expansion.

Another mooted source of foreign capital is aid to newspaper establishments. The Netherlands Communications Assistance Agency, the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the British Panos Institute and UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication propose packages for capital, technical, training and other assistance.

But such international aid would be merely palliative, a 'band-aid' operation that could well leave the beneficiaries some years later in conditions as bad as, or worse than, ever. Aid programmes are generally not permanent and cannot fulfil wholly, or even substantially, the needs of recipients, since this type of assistance does not essentially reverse the circumstances that created the conditions of need to begin with. Such aid programmes cannot address the fundamental causes of the problem, but only respond to the manifestations.

A further economic constraint is the weak industrial base for a dynamic mass media. Not even paper stapling pins are manufactured in Africa: paper, ink – indeed, all the material inputs for publishing – have to be imported. Thus, in countries where currencies are constantly being devalued, the unit price of newspapers, magazines and books gets ever higher and, finally, unaffordable. Publishing technology is

changing fast. African publishers become all the poorer when they have to chase after equipment that becomes obsolete every other year, leaving no spares on the market.

The technical expertise required to use and maintain today's publishing installations, too, has little in common with the innovative improvisations of Africa's illiterate, trial-by-error street mechanic. Without the development of local manufacture of publishing inputs, the long-term implications for a press industry, absolutely dependent on imports, cannot be encouraging.

Language factors

Economic constraints, though, are not the only factors. There is also the question of language. Africa has an estimated 2,000 languages, and most societies are multilingual. In such societies, foreign language use is often construed as a convenient vehicle for equal political participation by the various linguistic populations. But it is only participation by the elites from the different ethnic groups or nationalities. The masses are excluded directly from participation in legislative, judiciary or executive processes of governance, or from access to laws and policies, all of which are articulated in foreign languages.

This exclusion is not necessarily rectified where literacy in the foreign language ceases to be one of the criteria for qualification to contest public office. The mere use of mother tongues by government structures does not make for informed, confident involvement if representatives (however democratically elected) are illiterate in the indigenous languages, and if legislation, together with the concepts and the diction of politics and economic matters, remains untranslated and not integrated in the national languages.

In that case, the illiterate among the legislators using the mother tongues are likely to defer to, or continue to be dominated in articulation of ideas by, literate foreign-language-speaking colleagues or bureaucrats. Similarly, some argue that there is a correlation between use of the mother tongue and the acquisition of scientific and technological knowledge, and development.[11] This suggests that the use of a foreign language as the principal medium of education and mass communication is a factor in Africa's underdevelopment.

The continent's overwhelming illiteracy is related to the degree to which, in most countries, the mother tongue has been neglected in preference for the colonial languages. Most language policies are confined to adult literacy programmes, thus excluding the young in school.

Even then, there remain two important factors which hinder the policies for adult literacy. First, literacy in the national languages does not enhance one's economic, political or social aspirations as does

literacy in the colonial language. Second, there are few opportunities or facilities for literates in the indigenous languages to develop their competence in those languages. The absence of books, newspapers, pamphlets, even advertising billboards, in the local languages leaves the literate with no opportunity to practise the acquired skill in literacy. The Bible and church hymnals still remain the most widely available literature in the local languages.

In terms of the press, it is the use of foreign languages (outside the Arab-speaking region) which defines most graphically its elite character. Indeed, the dominance of foreign languages in the other mass media – radio, television, movies – shows both how marginalised the masses are from these cultural institutions, and the cultural alienation of the elites. Such marginalisation is compounded further by the fact that the mass communications media are imported technologies, whose use in Africa follows the forms, format and models of communication developed in Europe and North America. For example, news reporting and writing or radio broadcast programmes scarcely consider the possible suitability of indigenous forms of communicating information or story-telling.

Nonetheless, by far the most obvious limitation on the press as effective media for popular involvement in mass communication is the language factor.

For many observers of the media in Africa, the continent's multilingual reality is considered a major constraint on effective mass communication. In broadcasting, for example, the economic costs of multilingual output are considerable – and more so with television – since every factor, from personnel to tapes, has to be multiplied according to the number of languages used. In reality, many minority linguistic populations do not find a place on the air.

Enormous as the economic costs may be, the cultural, political and social benefits of mass media communication in local languages demand an improvement in current practices. The technical and practical solution to broadcasting in many languages, both satisfying the legitimate demands of different linguistic groups and, at the same time, meeting the demands of adequate programming time, can be met by the establishment of community radio stations.[12]

The cultural and political implications of using radio for local language, creative and artistic developments, involvement in public affairs discussions and for mobilising communities for meaningful development projects are many, and could at the same time be varied according to the political characteristics of each community. In particular, the community radio stations could be an important instrument to advance democratic interests, especially if management, programming and other decisions were controlled by democratically constituted community bodies independent of local and traditional

clites (e.g., chiefs) or national state authority or agencies.

But, inadequate as broadcasting in African languages is, the situation is even worse in the print media; the most effective African language press being, with the exception of Amharic publications in Ethiopia, the KiSwahili papers in East Africa.

Data on the African language press are scarce and often unreliable – an indication of the short life span of the publications and of low official concern. The most recent comprehensive survey by UNESCO, published in 1985,[13] includes information on publications that folded a decade or more earlier. According to the survey, 181 African language journals and periodicals were identified in thirty-one countries, and, altogether, they used only fifty-five African tongues. Periodicals using only African languages were 22 per cent fewer than the total using African and European languages. At least nineteen states had no periodicals which used solely African languages and eight had no periodicals using them at all.

Circulation figures showed the extreme inadequacy of African language publications. Only Tanzania had a daily and weekly, and Kenya a monthly, all in KiSwahili, each of which had 100,000 circulation figure. Very few others surpassed 50,000 copies per edition: a Rwanda monthly (in Kinyarwanda, 95,000), a Nigerian monthly (in Yoruba, 85,000), a monthly in Tanzania (KiSwahili, 50,000), and a Malawi monthly (in Chichewa, 50,000).

The survey calculated that (allowing for guesses for the circulation of irregular and unknown periodicals, and based on an estimated 372 million population of the forty-five states), the circulation figures would 'represent an average of only about one-third per head of this population per year of one single issue of a newspaper or journal using an African language'. Excluding Tanzania, 'the average drops to one-fourth of a single issue of a single journal or newspaper per head per year'. It concluded that the ratio was even smaller with regard to journals using African languages only.

These papers are mostly owned and produced by government agencies; church missions produce a sizeable number. Private commercial investment in this area of the press is grossly insignificant (though it is important to note that Kenya's leading KiSwahili daily and weekly, *Taifa Leo* and *Taifa Weekly* respectively, are published by the Nation company). In fact, such papers are usually publications associated with adult literacy programmes; they are defined as rural press aimed 'at providing neoliterates with reading material while consolidating the newly established linguistic norms and providing awareness for the promotion, modernisation, and *technologising* [italics in original] of the local languages'.[14]

They are rural press insofar as they target a rural audience and concern themselves with social and economic conditions in the rural

areas, and communicate in languages accessible to the peoples there. But they are not rural if they are produced in the cities and without the control of the rural people. What is more important, in as much as they are government projects, operating under authoritarian conditions, their severest limitation is undoubtedly their political lameness. A press that breaches the status quo and disturbs rural conservatism is inconceivable. Thus, Mali's oft-cited UNESCO-aided national language papers – such as the Bambara monthly *Kibaru*, launched in 1972 and reaching a peak circulation of 22,000 in 1983,[15] or its Peuhl counterpart, the monthly *Kabaara* – could not have carried messages challenging the authoritarianism of Moussa Traore before his ouster in 1991.

Publishing problems

The publication of mass circulation African-language periodicals is constrained by all the factors affecting newspaper publication in general; indeed, such problems are accentuated with the African-language press. There are, too, additional problems. Poor language policies, particularly the neglect of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools, means a lesser rate of literacy in the national languages. Technical constraints include the non-availability of the alphabets on typewriter keyboards, in computer programming, and the absence of equivalent lexicons for terms and concepts in science, law, political science, etc., in the African languages.

The languages of some minority populations are only now being written, but even those with relatively longer traditions of writing have suffered years of neglect. This creates obvious problems in the training of specialists in the press. Publishing in all the local languages in any one country would incur enormous costs. Commercial considerations alone would discourage investments for languages spoken by very small populations, even assuming the existence of a high literacy rate in those languages. A desire to locate such press in the communities where the languages are spoken is fraught with infrastructural problems: lack of electricity to power presses, the price of transporting fuel to power electricity generating plants, and the cost of circulating publications in zones with sparse and widely scattered populations.

There is almost no incentive for private commercial interest in developing the African language press. Yet the predominance of foreign languages in the media precludes the mass of the population from active and well-informed participation in political debate for the democratic organisation of society.

The economic costs of establishing an African-language press, however, must be weighed against the long-term political, social and cultural costs of neglecting it. Moreover, the economic prospects of

publishing in a 'community language', a 'lingua franca' or a 'national language' could be competitive, provided that literacy programmes are intensified. 'Community languages', according to the UNESCO survey, are those 'few languages, each of which is the dominant and general means of communication in a district or province or similar large area. Even in the city areas, notoriously of mixed ethnicity, each has its own language for the purpose ... the languages of the streets and of the markets, as they are often called.'[16]

The survey identified 159 such languages (there could be about 200 altogether) which serve considerably wide areas within countries and, in many cases, are used in a number of countries. They are those languages usually considered by policy-makers for formal education and for literacy teaching in the areas they are spoken. Lingua francas are usually a few of the community languages 'widely understood and used for general communication'. Both these, as well as a country's 'national language' would be economically viable as a medium for the press.

However, development needs, respect for the cultural rights of all peoples in a country and the advancement and involvement of peoples in the democratic construction of society require that every language receives equal respect and attention in projects for their development and use. If Christian missions, in the crusade to win more African souls, continue to translate the Bible into languages hitherto unwritten, it becomes imperative for the states to pay similar attention to the languages for the seemingly more intractable mission of liberating African peoples from the darkness of poverty.

A number of possibilities for some state involvement in media development exist. For example, there could be two kinds of publication, according to the issues covered and geographical areas of circulation: a rural or local community type, and a national or provincial type circulating in a wider geographical area. Both could use a 'community', 'national' language or lingua franca; but very small populations would be best served by the first category. Circulation figures and their economic consequences might demand that publications of the second type have frequent periodicity (e.g., dailies and weeklies), while the former come out monthly or even less frequently.

The state, in this case, can support private initiative by waiving taxes on such establishments, getting its agencies to buy advertising space, providing printing facilities at discount fees and subscribing. The state itself ought to establish many such newspapers and journals, but it must get rural communities, mass organisations (e.g., farmers' groups) to set up their own papers, while the state provides training for editorial and technical staff, and supplies paper and other material at non-commercial rates, advertising and equipment.

Past and existing papers set up for literacy by governments, or with UNESCO or other external support, have entailed substantial state

material support, including subsidies on the cover price of publications. What is needed now is the political determination to promote the African-language press as media through which to develop the effective involvement of peoples in their own governance and socio-economic development.

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Notes and documents

European commentary

Racism: the road from Germany*

So much I have heard today is redolent of the past. But we live in a changing world, and we must cast aside yesterday's ideas, yesterday's analyses, yesterday's dogmas if we are to understand and withstand what is happening in our societies today. We may learn from the past, but we cannot use the perspectives of the past. We may have the same vision of the future, but we cannot work towards it on the basis of past strategies and past tactics – or with the aid of the same social forces, the same agents of change.

We have got to build socialism afresh, anew, from the circumstances of the present. We have got to fight racism, anew, from the circumstances of the present. And we have got to understand that, today, the fight against racism is also a fight for socialism.

How, then, should we understand this racism? And how fight it? What is the context of our times within which we should appraise it? What are the trends in society which help to create it?

We live in the throes of a technological revolution in which, instead of Labour being emancipated from Capital, Capital is being emancipated from Labour.

We live in the throes, not of a socialist revolution which has overthrown capital, but of a capitalist revolution that has overthrown socialism.

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* Expanded version of a talk given by A. Sivanandan to the PDS 'Europäischer Kongress gegen Rassismus', Berlin, 13-15 November 1992.

We live in the age of the information society when not the means of production, but the means of communication are paramount – and the creation of popular ideas and of popular culture is in the hands of the media and the government, the owners and controllers of the means of communication.

We live in a New World Order which is the old capitalist order without opposition, without contradiction – a New World Order in which the Second World has become the Third World and the Third World the site, once again, of primitive accumulation, of pillage and plunder, this time under the guise of IMF- and World Bank-'led' growth.

We live in a period of unprecedented prosperity coupled with unprecedented greed, leading to an unprecedented maldistribution of wealth – and the establishment of the two-thirds, one-third society, the dog-eat-dog society.

More recently, we have moved into a period of economic recession when all these things become more accentuated, when those who have won't give, and those who haven't must take, and whom they take from are those below them – and so to the dog-eat-underdog society.

If these are the general contours within which we've got to locate and understand racism today, the way to fight it, and stop it from developing into fascism, must be understood in terms of its particular trajectory in the countries of post-war Europe. Because the racism of post-war Europe is not the same as the racism of the colonial period or of Nazi Germany.

Racism never stands still: it changes its basis, its function, its thrust at different times in different places in different ways. So, although traces of past racisms inhered in the post-war racism of Europe, the raison d'être of racism itself was not so much colonial domination or plain race hatred as exploitation – of the foreign and/or colonial workforce that a war-torn, labour-less Europe was forced to recruit for the purposes of post-war reconstruction. Racism – racist ideas, a racist culture – was there, ready to hand, in European civilisation. And it was inevitable, natural even, that it should be used to provide western Europe with the cheap captive, disposable labour – labour on tap – that it desperately needed.

At first, such racial discrimination in countries like Britain (which had colonies to recruit its labour from) was left to market forces. But when, by the 1960s, such labour was no longer needed, racial discrimination got written into the immigration laws, into administration, into judicial decision-making. Racism became institutionalised in Britain as in the USA, it became respectable. The state had given its sanction to racism, and that, in turn, led to a wave of 'Paki-bashing' and 'Nigger-hunting' and the rise of the fascist National Front. Racism had, in fact, become part of the political process through which MPs got elected and governments made.

The history of that period has been recounted by me elsewhere (and is available in a German translation from Schwarze Risse Verlag), so I don't need to go into it now. But the point I am trying to make here is that popular racism derives its sanction and its sustenance from state racism and that, in our time, the seed-bed of fascism is racism.

Countries like West Germany, which had no colonies to speak of, had second-class status woven into the *gastarbeiter* system. An institutionalised system of discrimination was there from the beginning, either written into the constitution itself and/or anchored in legislation relating to foreigners. And so a whole popular culture of xenophobia (I baulk at that word, I'll tell you why later) grew up in West Germany, sustained by article 116 of the constitution – which, as you know, bases German citizenship on blood – and venerated by the state.

By the late 1970s, when Britain had entered Europe and had no need of the black Commonwealth, when the definition of Europe itself was of a Commonwealth of white nations, racism began to find new life not in the economic raison d'être of the post-war years, but in a new cultural exclusiveness, in a new white nationalism. Mrs Thatcher put it succinctly when, on the eve of her election as prime minister, she remarked that 'we were being rather swamped by people of a different culture'. And the media took up her cry in lurid and lying detail and the white fascist maggots crept out of their woodwork to attack our women-folk and fire-bomb our homes.

The point I want to stress here – and over and over again – is that it is the politicians and the media and the state that create popular racism, and inhere it in the popular culture, and provide, thereby, the breeding ground for fascism. The fight against fascism, therefore, must begin in the fight against racism, in the community, and involve the whole community. Fighting fascism per se will not eliminate racism; but eliminating racism would cut the ground from under fascist feet.

Today, as we move closer and closer towards Maastricht, a new, common, market racism is beginning to emerge. The countries of Europe are drawing from the lowest common denominators of each other's national racisms to formulate racist immigration laws and policies. That such laws and policies are being hatched in secret by ministers and officials and police chiefs in ad hoc committees of the Trevi group and at Schengen and Dublin, and not in the European parliament, bodes ill for the future of European democracy. But that they are laying the foundation for a new Euro state-racism bids fair to set us on course to a new Euro-fascism.

And because Germany is in the forefront of shaping the future destiny of Europe and sets the European agenda, what is happening in Germany is of vital concern to all of us.

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Hoyerswerda, Rostock, Eberswalde, Cottbus, Eissenhüttenstadt, Mannheim, Hünxe, Saarlouis (you see how easily the names trip off the tongue: that is what we know of Germany today, as we once knew of Germany as Buchenwald and Dachau) – they should not be happening at all. And all those deaths, of a Ghanaian, an Angolan, a Tamil, a Gypsy, something like twenty-five deaths in as many months, on the basis of their race, their colour, their difference? – they should not have happened at all. *One* death is a death too many.

But if these are horrendous crimes in themselves, what is more frightening is the official attitude towards them. In Hoyerswerda, the regional government, instead of protecting the refugee hostels against fascist attack and arresting the attackers, removed the attacked to refugee camps. After Rostock, chancellor Kohl and a whole host of leading figures found cause not to condemn the neo-nazis but to blame article 16 of the constitution for, in federal interior minister Seiters' words, 'this continuing flood of economic refugees' – thus transforming the nazi criminals into some sort of guardians of the community, and entering the country once more into the popular numbers game: the less refugees, the less fascists. The logical conclusion of which would be: no refugees, no fascists – which is not a far cry from the 'final solution'.

But if official attitudes compound the problem of racism and give a fillip to fascism, what is even more unnerving, in the long-term sense, is that Germany has not even got to first base in owning up to its racism or calling it by its proper name. Instead, you have terms like xenophobia, the fear of strangers, and *Ausländerfeindlichkeit*, hostility to strangers, foreigners. But you had no fear of strangers when you wanted them to come and slave for you. Then you called them guestworkers, another grand euphemism, and a misnomer, seeing the way you treat those guests by denying them residence and citizenship rights and keeping their German-born children for ever strangers and foreigners in their own country.

And why 'hostility to foreigners'? Why not just plain racism – or, if you want to be more specific, anti-Semitism, anti-Arabism, whatever?

You see, xenophobia is the other side of the coin of homogeneity. The fact that the German nation is defined in ethnic terms and that that definition is enshrined in the constitution does not allow you to think of Turks, Moroccans, Angolans, Vietnamese, who have been living here for over a generation as anything but strangers, foreigners.

The insane injustice of that situation emerged very clearly recently when Eugen W, the son of a German Jewish father and a Romanian Christian mother, having returned to Berlin in 1982 and worked for a state-owned transport company for nine years, applied for citizenship – and was refused. Eugen appealed. In September 1991, the High Court conclusively rejected his application on the basis that he was ethnically

Jewish and could not, therefore, be ethnically German.

The courts, too, do their bit in defining and refining Germanness.

The racism in the GDR, as in other communist countries, on the other hand, had never, to the best of my knowledge, been part of state policy as such. On the contrary: the state declared itself anti-racist. Its anti-racism, however, operated on a state-to-state level, and not on a people-to-people level. So that while the East German government welcomed Angolans, Mozambicans, Vietnamese, etc., to work or study in their country, they were still looked upon as foreigners and kept apart in hostels and barracks.

Hence, though East Germany's anti-racism was part of state dogma, it never got translated into popular culture. People were prepared to be anti-racist and be helpful to other races, so long as they lived over there, in their countries. But their presence in East Germany, though tolerated (precisely because of state strictures), was resented by ordinary people, particularly in times of growing economic hardship.

The state never taught the East German people to accept different peoples, different cultures, let alone live with them. It was basically a monolithic state with a monolithic culture. What it did, though, was to hold racial antagonisms in check. But the moment the (communist) state strictures were removed, the dogs of racism ran amok.

At the point of unification, therefore, you get both these racisms (the West German and the East) compounding each other. And the Kohl government, instead of alleviating the economic misery of East Germany which exacerbates racism, exacerbated racism further by offering up the anodyne of keeping refugees out and making Germany even more German.

And a whole school of thought has sprouted alongside this absurd notion: that it is the neo-nazi youth who are the real victims of their violence and should, therefore, be 'therapeuticised', 'social-worked' out of it. Which, apart from treating the victimisers as the victims and further sanctioning racial harassment and racial attacks, holds out also that racist behaviour stems from racist attitudes, without recognising, at the same time, that racist attitudes and racist behaviour stem from the material and social conditions in which young people are forced to live – and so shifts the burden of responsibility once more from society to the individual.

But such a misapprehension stems from the central belief that the youth are the agents of racist violence. Which is manifestly untrue. They are not the agents but the carriers of the virus. The agent is the state, the causes are unemployment, deprivation, poverty. If you want to socialise youth out of their racist behaviour, give them a stake in society. If you want to put a stop to their racist violence, outlaw racism, penalise racism, stop purveying the culture of racism, remove article 116 from the constitution.

For a start, Kohl's government should be putting money into East Germany without taking it out of there and running it down; it should be sharing the prosperity of West Germany, instead of hogging it all, and that should do West Germany itself some good. For the nationalism of West Germany today is not the nationalism of the defeated but of the victorious, the economically victorious. It is the nationalism of prosperity, not of poverty – the nationalism of those who want to jealously guard their prosperity and carry on becoming more prosperous still – the nationalism of those who define poverty itself as culpable, if not genetic, hereditary, racial.

One wall has come down, another has gone up between East Germany and West: a colonial wall – and it's the same wall that is going up against the rest of eastern Europe. The only difference is that the East Germans are refugees in their own country, economic refugees.

Refugees are made, not born. In the Third World, they are made by repressive political regimes installed and/or maintained by western powers to ease the path of foreign capital, MNCs, IMF and World Bank depredations. Free market economics have spelt the death of our countries. They create ecological devastation, population displacement and poverty for the many, and riches for the few. And poverty creates political strife and political repression, and political repression creates political refugees.

In trying to distinguish between economic refugees and political refugees, therefore – and it was Germany that first made the distinction in 1987 when it wanted to expel the Tamils – you have missed out a whole series of steps in the process of how economic refugees became political refugees. You have missed out on the basic truth that your economics is our politics. And the intake of refugees, therefore, must be based on need, not numbers.

Similarly, the refugees from eastern Europe. For well on fifty years, the West has kept battering on the doors of the East to break down Communism and let Capital in. And when it succeeded, precisely because the command economies could no longer feed their people, it turned its back on them as well and let them fight each over over what little was left – only this time the fight was defined in nationalistic terms: poverty had become ethnic.

The West must either put money into these countries or let their people come to it. It can't go round the world robbing people blind without the world arriving at its doorstep.

In that context, what I find the most encouraging thing about Germany is its article 16 which, though it does not give a right to seek entry, allows all who reach Germany to claim asylum there. And instead of Germany getting rid of that clause and going down to the level of Britain and the rest of Europe, the rest of Europe should rise up to Germany's example and give refugees and asylum-seekers a chance

to make their case in the same way.

Similarly, Germany and the other countries in Europe could do with the sort of anti-discriminatory laws (but with more teeth in them) that obtain in Britain.

Let the nations of Europe draw on the highest common factors of each other's immigration and race policies and give us a charter worthy of the values and mores of European civilisation.

As for the charter, my organisation in London and some of the anti-racist groups here have drawn up a 15-point programme [published below].

As for values and mores, we live today in a moral vacuum caused by the collapse of the working-class movement. The tension between Capital and Labour, which created liberal values and liberal freedoms, is gone.

Today, the new moral values will have to be forged in the tension between democracy (economic and political democracy) and nationalism/fascism – on the battlefield of democracy against fascism.

And that is where you and I come in. That is where socialism comes in. For socialism as an economic system may be over. Socialism as an oppositional culture may be fading. But there is still socialism as a faith, a creed, beliefs, values, traditions: loyalty, comradeship, solidarity, a sense of sacrifice and service, a sense of community, a feel for the less well-off, a passion for justice – all the great and simple things that make us human.

Socialism, my friends, is not the past. Socialism is the future.

A. SIVANANDAN

Proposals for an anti-racist policy in Europe

Refugee protection
1 All European countries should adopt the constitutional right to asylum incorporated in article 16 of the German constitution.[1]
2 (a) All European countries should exempt refugees from the requirement to obtain visas before travelling.[2]

(b) There should be no carrier sanctions because it is not the function of airlines to operate a government's immigration controls. (Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Greece and France do not have carrier sanctions.)
3 Clear and common criteria should be agreed for the granting of asylum in all European countries.
4 Such criteria should be based on the best current practice, in granting asylum to victims of civil war, pogrom or civil disturbance, in addition to victims of persecution. (Currently, only granted as

'exceptional leave' in UK, 'B' status in Germany and 'tolerated refugee status' in the Netherlands.)

5 No European country should detain asylum-seekers in prisons, camps or detention centres, save on commission of criminal offences.[3]

6 There should be full and fair asylum determination procedures, including rights of appeal (which suspend removal from the territory) and the right to legal representation.

7 The grant of asylum should be conclusive of the rights to residence and work in the host country.[4]

8 All European central governments should make adequate funds available for local and regional governments to provide adequate housing, health care and resettlement facilities, including language training for refugees. (Sweden has formerly done this.)

General

9 The right to citizenship in the country of birth (ius soli) should be recognised in all European countries. (Currently, Ireland and Sweden retain this right unqualified by citizenship or residence rights of parent.)

10 All European countries should recognise the right to apply for citizenship after five years' residence in the country. (Currently, UK, Italy, Ireland, Belgium, Sweden recognise this right, though most set additional conditions.)

11 All European governments should take effective steps to ensure that all who live in their country are equal under the law in all respects (in freedom of assembly and association, in employment, housing, education, in relation to policing, etc.).

12 All European governments should outlaw racism – and, to this end, adopt vigorous and effective laws against racial attacks, racial discrimination and incitement to racial hatred. (Currently, UK and Luxembourg have such laws, but they are not vigorous or effective.)

13 Racial discrimination by any public employee should be an offence – the penalties for which should include dismissal.

14 The sole criterion of eligibility for services such as housing, health, welfare and education should be need, not immigration status as evidenced by internal passport controls. (Formerly so in UK until the 1980s.)

15 All European governments should adopt immediate measures to regularise the status of immigrants and migrant workers and recognise the right of all who work in their countries to live there.[5]

Notes

1   This does not give a right to go to Germany, but allows all who reach Germany to claim asylum there. The Dublin Convention, which allows refugees to be returned to

the first European country to which they arrived, is inconsistent with the right to asylum in the country of application. It is not yet in force. There should be a campaign against ratification of the Dublin Convention.

2   The imposition of visa requirements, combined with carrier sanctions (fining airlines which carry undocumented or falsely documented passengers) is against the spirit of the Geneva Convention, and arguably violates the UN Convention on Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights (article 2: right to life; article 3: right to freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment). At present, five EC countries have carrier sanctions: UK, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Belgium.

3   In France, the detention of asylum-seekers at airports has been declared illegal by the Administrative Court.

4   This is so in the UK, but in France and Germany refugees still have to apply separately for residence and work rights.

5   This is not a call for a one-off amnesty, but recognition of a general principle. France until the 1970s, and Italy, Spain and Portugal until very recently, had hundreds of thousands of 'unauthorised workers' who were either granted residence on demand, or simply allowed to stay.

US commentary

Race and class in the US presidential election

Every four years, the American people engage in a public spectacle called a 'presidential election'. It is a ritualised contest which has as many cultural implications as practical political consequences. On the first Tuesday of November of every leap year, two representatives of the various factions of the ruling classes are lifted into the ring of public opinion to slug it out until the final bell is rung. The complicated aspect of this electoral sport is in the scoring. The popular vote does not actually select the winner. Rather, each state is allocated a certain number of 'electoral votes', determined by the total number of a state's elected members in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

In nearly all cases, the majority or plurality winner of a state's popular votes is awarded the entire electoral vote of a particular state. In effect, slim majorities for a candidate in a small number of heavily populated states (such as California, New York, Texas, Florida or Illinois) could produce victory in the Electoral College, even if such a candidate lost the overall popular vote nationally. This has happened several times in American history: the victor of the popular election was denied the presidency because of his inability to gain a majority in the Electoral College. And if no one reaches an absolute majority of votes in the Electoral College, the House of Representatives chooses the president. Even the scoring system in boxing matches, notoriously corrupt as it is, is considerably less complicated than the archaic

American presidential process.

Despite the idiosyncrasies of this political system, which is designed to cement consensus among the governed, certain long-term patterns can be identified about American political culture and the presidency. There are two governing rules to keep in mind. Rule one: American presidents who run for re-election usually win, unless there is an economic recession or some unusual political calamity. In the twentieth century, with the exception of the 1912 presidential contest, no incumbent president has ever received less than 39.6 per cent of the popular vote. Even the last Democratic presidential incumbent, the unpopular former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter, who was humiliated by the Iranian hostage crisis, massively high domestic unemployment rates and high interest rates, still received 41 per cent of the popular vote in a three-way race. On average, with the exception of the 1912 election, presidential incumbents have received 53.6 per cent of the popular vote.[1]

Rule two: since the outbreak of the cold war nearly half a century ago, the majority of white Americans have consistently chosen Republicans over Democratic presidential candidates. In over forty years, the majority of white voters have voted for a Democratic candidate only once – Lyndon Johnson in 1964. Two-thirds of all white voters backed Ronald Reagan in 1984, and 60 per cent of all whites supported George Bush against Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis four years ago. In the South, with its history of racial hatred and religious fundamentalism, overall white support for Republican presidential candidates has been 70 per cent, and among white evangelical Christians, 80 per cent. Since the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, in presidential contests the Republican party operates almost like a white united front, dominated by the most racist, reactionary sectors of corporate and finance capital, and the most backward cultural and religious movements.[2]

Eighteen months ago, the 1992 presidential campaign was predicted by nearly every observer to be a coronation of Bush, and a smashing victory for Republicans in the House and Senate races. The decennial redistricting of congressional seats in 1992 greatly favoured Republicans, because many new House districts were created in conservative areas like southern California, Texas and Florida. Congressional scandals over recent years, including the passing of salary increases for themselves in the middle of the night, created a widespread hostility and anger aimed at the predominantly Democratic Congress. Fresh from his murderous military triumph over Iraq, Bush basked in the warm glow of public approval polls, which for a time stood above 80 per cent. The Democratic party's primary public spokespersons, such as New York governor Mario Cuomo, Jesse Jackson and New Jersey senator Bill Bradley, refused to run. Even worse, the Democrat

who finally emerged from the long and bloody nomination process, Arkansas governor Bill Clinton, had been seriously tarnished by charges of marital infidelity, marijuana smoking and dodging the military draft during the Vietnam war. Surely, Bush would be re-elected in a landslide, like Reagan in 1984.

The victory of Clinton in last November's presidential election represented not simply a reversal of the conservative Reagan-Bush regime of the previous twelve years, but an almost unprecedented repudiation of an American leader. Bush received 38 million popular votes, only 37.5 per cent of the overall electorate. This was the lowest percentage of the popular vote recorded by any incumbent president seeking re-election in eighty years. Bush received 168 electoral votes, to Clinton's 370; Clinton carried reliably Republican states which a Democrat had not carried in a generation, such as New Hampshire, New Jersey and New Mexico. The anti-Bush vote was divided between Clinton and Perot. Perot's 18.8 per cent of the total popular vote (19.2 million votes) was the second highest vote total of any independent candidate seeking the presidency in the twentieth century. Clinton received more than 43.7 million popular votes, which was 43 per cent of the overall electorate.[3]

A closer analysis of Clinton's core constituency reveals that it was essentially racial and ethnic minorities, working-class and poor people, and people who depended heavily on governmental programmes, such as welfare, student educational loans, social security payments and other social services. According to voters' exit polling data, 82 per cent of all African-Americans who voted selected Clinton, the highest level of support which the Democratic candidate received from any group. Clinton also received substantial support from Jewish voters (78 per cent) and from Latinos (62 per cent). Blue-collar workers and the poor overwhelmingly backed Clinton as well. People earning less than $15,000 per year went for the Arkansas Democrat by 59 per cent. Others in this group included trade union members and members of households (55 per cent), the unemployed (56 per cent) and women without a high school diploma (58 per cent). A majority of Americans over the age of 60 (50 per cent), full-time students (50 per cent) and first-time voters (49 per cent) endorsed Clinton over Bush and Perot. The only upper income group which clearly aligned itself with Clinton was Americans with postgraduate university education or degrees (49 per cent).

Bush's core supporters were strikingly different – overwhelmingly white, economically privileged and culturally conservative. Bush scored best among 'born again Christian' evangelicals (61 per cent), Southern white males (48 per cent), the small and relatively affluent Asian-American community (62 per cent), ideological conservatives (65 per cent) and people earning more than $75,000 annually (48 per

cent). If African-Americans and Latinos had stayed home from the polls, Bush would have received a narrow electoral college and popular vote victory. A plurality of all white voters went for Bush (41 per cent) over Clinton (39 per cent) and Perot (20 per cent). The overwhelming backing of Blacks, for example, meant that Clinton was able to carry a number of states in which the majority of white voters favoured Bush. For example, Clinton's narrow victories over Bush in Georgia (44 v 43 per cent), Louisiana (46 v 42 per cent), Tennessee (47 v 43 per cent), New Jersey (43 v 41 per cent) and Ohio (40 v 39 per cent) were attributable to strong support by the African-American electorate. Latinos in New Mexico (38 per cent of the state's voters), California (26 per cent Latino) and Colorado (13 per cent) gave Clinton crucial support, helping him to win these states.[4]

There are several key issues or questions which illuminate the larger political significance of the electoral events of November 1992. How and why was Bush defeated? How did Bill Clinton overcome long odds and achieve his lifelong ambition of winning the presidency, and what is the meaning of the Democratic party's ideological and policy shift to the right during the campaign? And what was the role of race and racism?

Why Bush lost

Bill Clinton did not really win the presidency; George Bush lost it. There are many reasons why George Bush became a one-term president, to be remembered chiefly for his narrowness of political vision, an absence of personal ethics, and afflicted with a sheeplike devotion to the whims and interests of corporate capitalism.

Every American election from 1948 until 1988 had occurred in the context of the cold war, and the international conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. In selecting a leader, many American voters thought of the qualities necessary for leadership against what Reagan termed the 'evil empire'. Expertise in international affairs, some intimate knowledge of America's military arsenal and even personal experience in the armed forces were considered nearly essential. The cold war's domestic impact was to push the entire axis of American politics to the right. Reagan's rise to power in 1980 was the triumph of a whole history of growing economic reaction, racism and class warfare against working people. And George Bush was a logical product of that repressive history: a decorated veteran of the second world war, the son of a wealthy Republican senator, two-term congressman from Texas, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency and vice president to Reagan. Whenever Bush's personal beliefs conflicted with his drive for power, he eagerly sacrificed his principles. In the 1988 Republican primaries, Bush

challenged Reagan by denouncing his economic plans as 'voodoo economics'; twelve years later, he had become voodoo's high priest.

But, with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the dismantling of the Soviet bloc in Europe and, finally, the termination of the USSR, everything changed. Both the United States and the Soviet Union actually lost the cold war. The real costs to the American people should be weighed by the hundreds of billions of dollars annually wasted on nuclear and conventional weaponry, the lack of investment in upgrading factories and in new technologies, the deterioration of highways and bridges, and the lack of adequate federal government support for schools, health care, housing and other basic human needs. No amount of anti-communist rhetoric could hide the millions of lost jobs, the decline in real incomes for millions of workers and the rise in poverty rates. Somehow, Bush never understood this. He had never felt the pain of hunger, discrimination or poverty in his lifetime. He could not comprehend the heartache of being without a job, or the fear of not being able to buy warm winter clothes for his children, as the winter months approached. Nor could he feel the deep anxieties of middle-class families, the fear of losing their homes. 'Anxiety' for president Bush was not knowing which fork to use at a formal dinner.

Millions of white Americans, who had never been personally touched by the agony of joblessness and economic despair, were plunged into chaos. According to the Census Bureau, median income levels when adjusted for the rate of inflation shrank in twenty-four of fifty states in the 1980s. Overall household incomes increased an average of only 6.5 per cent, far below the rate of other costs; in the same years, for example, housing jumped 27 per cent in cost. A majority of the Americans who are poor, or who live in federally-subsidised housing, or who receive welfare payments, are not Latino or Black – they are white.

During the summer of 1992, the Bush administration negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico, which proposed the elimination of almost all restrictions on exports, imports and corporate investment between these nations. Despite Bush's enthusiastic endorsement for the accord, critics pointed out that hundreds of thousands of mostly lower-paying jobs in the US would be destroyed. The real incomes of workers without a college education had dropped 20 per cent since 1979. And without a massive, federally-funded educational and vocational retraining programme, preparing blue-collar workers for the new technologies, unemployment would become even worse. Bush failed to speak to any of these economic fears. By the end of October 1992, among Americans who had an opinion about the North American trade pact, it was opposed by nearly two to one. The general impression that Bush cared little about workers' and poor people's jobs was widely accepted.

The economic recession which Bush boasted of having ended more than one year ago continued to depress wages and increase unemployment lines. In the twelve months prior to the election, over 20 per cent of all American families had experience of someone who had lost a job during that time. Of those jobless Americans who had obtained new employment, more than half had experienced a loss in wages in their new jobs. But the Bush campaign virtually ignored this entire class of American working people.

However, Bush's most crucial electoral mistake was in underestimating Clinton's political strengths, and the capacity of the national Democratic party to mount a serious campaign. If political clout is calculated by the number of ballots one receives, Clinton had emerged from the Democratic primaries as the strongest candidate in decades. Clinton had received a higher percentage of the national primary vote, 52 per cent, than any Democrat seeking the presidency in twenty years. He won 10.5 million primary votes, more than any Democrat or Republican, in the history of presidential primary elections. And, by mid-July, nearly all of the major leaders of the Democratic party, including Jesse Jackson, had come together to endorse his nomination. For several critical months in the spring and early summer of 1992, Bush's campaign strategists assumed mistakenly that their chief electoral rival was H. Ross Perot, not Clinton; consequently, they aimed their rhetorical fire largely against the Texas billionaire. This was a serious strategic error, and, although Bush closed much of the gap between himself and Clinton during the campaign's final weeks, his mistakes in political judgment cost him the presidency.

In the end, Americans desperately wanted 'change'. Most who voted for Clinton weren't endorsing the Democratic nominee. They were voting *against* George Bush.[5]

Race and the election

The shadow of race is always present in American politics, and the recent contest was no exception. Yet the curious reality is that, in the political aftermath of the racial uprisings in Los Angeles in April-May 1992, the most costly and violent social explosion in American history, none of the major candidates really addressed or confronted the fundamental racial crisis in this country. As political critic Alan Ehrenhalt observed: 'In every Presidential election since 1968, the middle-class concerns of race and crime have been at the centre of campaign debate. This year, they have scarcely been discussed.'[6]

George Bush's public record on race relations is filled with ambiguity and cynical opportunism. As a student at Yale university nearly five decades ago, he led the fund-raising drive for the United Negro College Fund, providing much-needed support for historically Black

colleges. As a local Republican leader in Texas, he placed party funds in a Black-owned bank. He personally opposed racial discrimination in housing, explaining to conservative whites that 'it seems fundamental that a man should not have a door slammed in his face because he is a Negro'. But Bush could also jettison any commitments to Black equality, depending upon the circumstances. In 1964, he vigorously opposed the Civil Rights Act which outlawed racial segregation in public accommodations, condemning the measure as 'bad legislation'. In the 1988 presidential campaign, Bush benefited from the manipulations of ugly racist sentiments against his Democratic challenger, Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts. Pro-Bush advertisements depicted the case of Willie Horton, a Black convict who had raped and beaten a white woman while on Dukakis's prison furlough programme. The political commercials were used to illustrate Dukakis's 'softness' on violent crime and his 'permissive' attitude towards African-Americans. As president, Bush vetoed the 1990 Civil Rights Act, demagogically smearing the measure as fostering strict 'racial quotas'. Bush's manipulation of the political 'race card' contributed directly to the emergence of even more racist spokesmen on the far Right, such as journalist Patrick Buchanan and David Duke, unsuccessful Republican gubernatorial candidate in Louisiana in 1991.[7]

Ross Perot received some surprisingly strong support from Blacks at the beginning of his independent candidacy. For months, Jesse Jackson openly flirted with Perot, and his Rainbow Coalition nearly endorsed him. In June, a national survey of African-American voters aged 18 to 34 found that 21 per cent favoured Perot. But a negative reaction against Perot developed when it was learned that the Texas billionaire opposed affirmative action. When the Electronic Data Systems corporation was under Perot's ownership, the company had barely 1 per cent Black and Latino managers and administrators. Perot inflicted irreparable damage upon himself, as far as African-Americans were concerned, after delivering a dreadfully paternalistic speech before the national convention of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People). Perot referred to Blacks as 'you people' – a statement reflecting both his personal and political distance from the real problems of African-Americans.[8]

Clinton's relationship with the Black community was far more complicated. Growing up in a rural, impoverished family with an abusive, alcoholic stepfather, Clinton's personal experiences gave him some insight into the inherent unfairness of class and racial oppression. As an idealistic college student at Georgetown university, he assisted poor, rural African-Americans participating in a civil rights protest in Washington DC, led by the Reverend Ralph David Abernathy. As governor of a small southern state, he cultivated cordial links with African-American constituents, appointing more Blacks to govern-

mental positions than all previous Arkansas governors combined.

Clinton could speak with compassion and power in his denunciations of racism and economic inequality, something completely alien to both Perot and Bush. In the aftermath of the Los Angeles racial revolt of April-May 1992, for instance, the Democratic candidate declared:

> The Republicans, when they needed to prove Michael Dukakis was soft on crime, brought out Willie Horton. The Republicans, when they needed to cover up for their senseless economic strategy that is driving income down for most American families while they work harder, blame it on quotas so there can be racial resentment instead of honest analysis of our economic falsehoods... We have made a great deal of progress for those of us who live in the mainstream of America. But what has happened beneath that? Beneath that, there are those who are not part of our community, where values have been shredded by the hard knife of experience, where there is the disintegration of family and neighborhood and jobs and the rise of drugs and guns and gangs.[9]

But Clinton's advisers, painfully aware that no Democratic presidential candidate had received a majority of the white vote in nearly thirty years, sharply advised Clinton to distance himself from the problems of lower-income Blacks in general, and from Jesse Jackson in particular. This was the reason for Clinton's calculated public break with Jackson over the 'Sister Souljah' controversy. Clinton also embraced changes in welfare laws which would deny increased payments to poor mothers who had additional children while on welfare. Throughout the campaign, Clinton deliberately distanced himself from Jackson, even avoiding being photographed with him.[10]

None of this seemed to matter to most African-American mayors, legislators and civil rights leaders, who are nearly all Democrats. On the day following the election, they were already preaching the gospel of 'Let's give Clinton a chance' among their working-class and poor constituents. Deliberately ignored was the fact that Arkansas under Clinton was only one of two states which never passed a civil rights law; that Arkansas Blacks have one of the highest poverty rates in the nation – 43 per cent, compared to only 14.5 per cent for Arkansas whites, or 30 per cent for African-Americans nationwide. None of the Black Democrats praising Clinton's victory discussed the president-elect's frequent golfing excursions at all-white, private country clubs.

The reason that Clinton could treat Jackson with public contempt, while successfully maintaining backing among African-Americans, was his conscious appeal to only part of the Black community – the middle class. According to the US Census Bureau, since 1967 the number of African-American families classified as 'middle class' has increased by 400 per cent. Hundreds of thousands of these families

have moved out of the ghetto into the suburbs, and middle-class, professional neighbourhoods which are largely Black have grown inside many cities. By 1990, about 15 per cent of all Black households were earning above $50,000 annually, and the average income among the top 20 per cent of all African-American families was $61,213. Upper-income, college-educated Blacks vote at rates comparable to white middle-class voters. For example, about 75 per cent of all Blacks earning more than $50,000 voted in the presidential election, while barely 30 per cent of impoverished Blacks voted. By appealing to the Black petty bourgeoisie, emphasising the role of capitalism as a positive force for African-American development, Clinton attempted to construct a 'post-Civil Rights' constituency among Blacks.

Clinton's model for this 'middle-class Black' electoral strategy owes much to African-American Democratic leader Douglas Wilder. Elected governor of Virginia in 1990, Wilder based his campaign on a conservative approach to economic development. He called for increased police expenditures, the death penalty and cuts in welfare programmes. Wilder also pushed away Jesse Jackson to arm's length, symbolically telling the white electorate that he was unsympathetic to the Rainbow Coalition's social democratic agenda.

Clinton is reaching for a new set of Black advisers who, like Wilder, are economic 'pragmatists' and who are also more conservative on social and international issues than Jackson. Some of these new Black political accommodationists include former Texas congresswoman Barbara Jordan, congressman Mike Espy of Mississippi, mayor Norm Rice of Seattle, and former Urban League director Vernon Jordan. They have been political outsiders for so long, with conservative Republicans controlling the White House, the courts and federal bureaucracy for twenty out of the past twenty-four years, that they seem willing to go along with nearly anything Clinton says or does. As representative John Lewis, the veteran civil rights activist, declared: 'In 1992, we don't need a candidate singing "We shall overcome", or carrying a sign.'[11]

Some astute Republicans also followed Clinton's lead in exploiting the growing class divisions among African-Americans. In the closely contested senatorial race in New York, conservative Republican incumbent Alfonse D'Amato sought to split the traditionally Democratic Black vote. Spending $10 million overall in his campaign, he saturated Black and Hispanic radio stations in New York City, attacking his Democratic challenger Robert Abrams. On the eve of the election, D'Amato held a surprise press conference, announcing his endorsement by several prominent Black ministers and by the nation's best-known African-American newspaper, the *Amsterdam News*. Given D'Amato's filthy record – he strongly opposes affirmative action, had voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1990, and had even

channelled financing from the Department of Housing and Urban Development away from poor Black neighbourhoods towards white companies – the actions of these middle-class Black leaders were, at best, perplexing. In its apologetic endorsement, the *Amsterdam News* explained that D'Amato was perhaps 'the lesser of two evils'. Black voters were warned to reject the white liberal Democratic candidate in favour of the conservative Republican, but were told to 'keep both eyes open all night'. The *Amsterdam News* editorial persuaded thousands of African-Americans to take a chance on D'Amato. According to exit polling data, 16 per cent of all Black voters backed D'Amato. That was the margin which permitted the racist Republican D'Amato to achieve victory (51 v 49 per cent).[12] D'Amato's last-minute triumph indicates that slavery is perhaps not yet dead in America: some Blacks can still be purchased by the highest bidder.

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Book reviews

The C. L. R. James Reader

Edited by ANNA GRIMSHAW (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992). 451pp.
£12.95.

C. L. R. James's Caribbean

Edited by PAGET HENRY and PAUL BUHLE (Durham, NC,
Duke University Press, and Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1992). 304pp.
£12.95.

In the spring of 1991, a gathering took place at a college outside Boston
to commemorate C.L.R. James's work. In an unusual turn of events,
one of the literature tables, rather scanty of holdings, was selling
unobtrusive little beige-coloured pamphlets filled with material that
some of the specialists on the roster had never heard of. Among them
was an annotated guide to archival holdings in New York, a portrait
and assessment of James's 'The struggle for happiness' (a major
unpublished study by James – over 400 typed pages – on American
popular culture), and a preview of the *C. L. R. James Reader*.

A labour of love by an intimate friend and colleague, Grimshaw's
Reader claims to revise an older story, slightly condescending, about
an interesting and prolific Caribbean intellectual named James. With a
lot of digging into obscure papers, with a family of contacts and
confidants consulted over years, Anna Grimshaw has composed this
book in a mood that can only be called devotion. She presents the case
that James was not just a rival to the canonical great authors, not
simply the Voltaire of the post-colonial bookshelf, but that rare thing,
a 'visionary'. It was, she argues, his 'integrated' conception of freedom
and work, of spontaneity and organisation – of a trust in people that

was also an allegiance to the person – that made James's work the basis for political practice in our time. Grimshaw is what might be called a 'Jamesian', and James, for her, is the Toussaint of the modern era.

What gives Grimshaw her authority is her knowledge of the archive; few know James with the completeness that she does. As his former secretary, she presents here, for the first time, letters and fragments that have never seen print, and some of this is major – especially the writings on American popular culture. With a coverage from occasional mimeographed papers to out-of-the-way speeches, the bibliography improves upon the earlier one found at the end of *At the Rendezvous of Victory*, and there is a helpful note on the titles and publication sites of Caribbean newspapers, diaspora periodicals and other essential sources.

Why there is no selection from James's greatest single work – *The Black Jacobins* – is puzzling. It needs to be there, for this is otherwise the perfect handbook for the newcomer. But among the new inclusions is the obscure play version of *The Black Jacobins* (written before he had even planned the history), performed in 1936 at London's Westminster Theatre. Also unexpected are excerpts from his extraordinarily informative (and revealingly personal) letters to Constance Webb; a portion of the America project, 'The struggle for happiness'; key shorter interventions on art and culture, among them 'Letters to literary critics', and 'Popular art and the cultural tradition'; and, finally (and to me perhaps the most interesting), a sampling of his writing for the *Nation* – the paper he edited after independence in Trinidad on behalf of the People's National Movement (PNM).

All of these areas in their own way – the early auteurist yearnings, the post-Trotskyist retreat into 'cultural politics', and the late plain-speaking as the representative of an actual government (so rare for James) – never seem to find their way into current discussions of James. Even if Grimshaw's revision is not the right one, the text she creates is, in fact, revisionary, and this book will reveal a James many did not know existed.

But there are reasons to challenge her view of James as a practical guide to current politics – at least, with so few notes of doubt. His moments of genius were mixed with meandering and confusion, above all in the 1940s and early 1950s – the precise moment of his career that Grimshaw fixes on as the least known and most exemplary. James has an enormous amount to say to the current political scene, but the positions that would matter most are the most unpopular, and not those highlighted in this book. Against the current tenor would be, say, James's tough stand against 'identity' politics, his position that class was a more salient division of power than race, or (very important, and one of his great legacies) his enthusiastic conversational style of writing.

But claims for a 'Jamesian' politics have to take the bad with the good. A sensitive reader can see that his view of the Soviet experience damaged his spirit. The work on state capitalism, for all its moral vigour, is lifeless and even superficial; the writing on dialectics is boastful and idiosyncratic. More than this, when we get to *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways* in 1954, we find him actually rallying America to vigilance against communism, especially in the suppressed final chapter, 'A natural but necessary conclusion', with its painfully illogical hatred of a CP organiser he met in prison (and who he himself describes as a selfless and unbelievably effective defender of the other prisoners). James was brave and honest always, and there is a familiar boldness of thought even in his later writing on film, Shakespeare or Ghana, though he seemed there increasingly to settle into a kind of utopian anarchist populism that had little to say to actual movements. It is important not to forget that he was largely the thing he tried not to be from his years in Nelson onwards: 'a pure intellectual' (as Jim Murray has remarked). This aspect of his thinking comes out very clearly in the Webb letters, and is not a reason to devalue his achievement, only to remember what it was.

Still, the *Reader* is an achievement of its own. Unlike the James anthologies of the early 1970s (*Spheres of Existence, The Future in the Present* and *At the Rendezvous of Victory*), this one maps out the career visually. The earlier anthologies had a random quality. While reminding us of James's wide-ranging interests, reproducing, say, a speech to a Ladbroke Grove meeting-hall or offering a passage from an address to Missouri sharecroppers, the value was uneven; there was no context. As primary sources, they bore fruit, but the pickings were slim. What strikes one about the selection here is its brilliantly high quality. Anyone who has worked through James's books on West Indian self-government or the Gold Coast, cricket or Melville, can see the care Grimshaw has taken in assembling the best and most faithful pieces of the Jamesian portrait in a single, readable guide.

Paget Henry and Paul Buhle's *C.L.R. James's Caribbean* is the project of insiders with very high standards and a wonderfully collo-quial voice. More scholarly than earlier collections, the book speaks intelligently to the public as a whole, drawing on the talents of poets, academics, politicos and James himself. The collection ranges from personal snapshots and interviews to local sociological studies in the closing chapters (the volume's strength), dipping into the cultural issues of cricket, literary theory and the canon along the way.

In the end, although with some unevenness, the book lives up to its title (the 'Caribbean') without seeming cramped. James, after all, was almost famously indifferent to his Caribbean origins in much (although not all) of his writing, and, after 1932, spent the lion's share of his time in England and the US – his true love and his real 'America'.

The West Indian character, he boasted, was dear for being *without* national specificity: it was a world culture peculiarly suited for picking up European culture where Europe left off.

So, to excise the long stretches of his career outside the Caribbean would seem to distort it in advance, and be a little too eager to stake out a kind of 'indigenous' James that is alien to his message. But this volume is not guilty of that – in part, because the closing chapters show the goal to be critical focus not cultural nationalism. The essays richly cast James against the vivid realities of people and situations: the PNM's evolution in Trinidad, for example, the economic legacies of Arthur Lewis, or Tim Hector's James-inspired Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement. In essays by Walton Look Lai and Paget Henry, James comes to life in a way that simple readings of his work don't allow, for we see his lived effects among those best poised to care about his legacy. These essays are not about hero-worship either. They point out the weaknesses and the oversights of his thought carefully and fairly. The result is a greater admiration for James than simply praising him.

If there is an area of the book weaker than the rest, it is the very one emphasised by Grimshaw in the *Reader*, and that is culture. The best here is very fine – Neil Lazarus' artful account of James's views on cricket and Kent Worcester's timely thoughts on the canon. And, although not only about culture, the interview with George Lamming is actually stunning. The most original and suggestive series of insights I have ever seen on James, the eight short pages of the interview could only have been the work of a Caribbean novelist and personal witness who had travelled the same triangular trade-route that James had between England, the Caribbean and the US as young writer, visiting professor, and avid follower of politics. Lamming's affectionate sharing of trials and goals is what probably gives the interview its wisdom. But why, then, is the essay by Sylvia Wynter – a novelist, teacher and traveller herself – so off the mark? She writes that James created a political and literary 'poiesis' that shares a great deal with deconstructive theory.

Written in a prose filled with neologisms that James would have despised (he claimed not even to understand William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*), the essay seems to ignore the obvious. To begin with, what kind of deconstructive theory endorses, as James did shamelessly, the humanism of the Enlightenment? How could a deconstructive theory sit well with James's support for the 'great author' school of aesthetics, or his theories of novelistic 'character' that could have come wholesale from Georg Lukacs, or his very traditional belief, also reminiscent of Lukacs, that literature is a mirror of society's primal historical forces? The clearest and crudest way of putting what is wrong with her essay is to say, simply, that she is an idealist in the

technical or philosophical sense. For her, very much unlike James, the repression that most needs overturning occurs within what she calls 'conceptual frames', rather than, say, sugar estates or whaling ships. Similarly, the essay is based on a slippery use of the term 'pluri-dimensional', which is metaphorically inflated to serve all sorts of ends, but which is grounded in only one, very local, aspect of James's actual views – the suspicion he had of centralised authorities.

We keep expecting Wynter to concede some of these problems, but remarkably she does not, only compounding them. The one really essential category in James's thought, for example, was 'personality', which he developed fully in his biographical fixations on Cipriani, Toussaint, Melville and elsewhere, and, in a broader theoretical sense, in 'The struggle for happiness'. The concept, at least the way he understood it, could not be better designed to clash with the predict-able focus of Wynter's deconstructive reading, which is, of course, 'discourse', since the whole thrust of that term is to dispute the independent agency of the subject – James's bread and butter. At another level, she misunderstands a concept as central to James as 'dialectics', which she pretends to expose as inconsistencies in his thought. It is not just that, unlike Lamming, she is not 'in the groove'; she just doesn't seem to care whether her comments have any bearing on James at all. She calls James a 'Puritan', for instance – a comment that would surprise readers of the sexual messages in the Webb letters, or the passages where he admires the tender treatment of homoerotic love between Queequeg and Ishmael in *Moby Dick*.

The editors then make the mistake of following Wynter's leads in their own jointly written chapter, 'Caliban as deconstructionist'. I find Buhle's and Henry's work elsewhere (including elsewhere in this volume) excellent, and even at times superb. But they just do not have the hang of post-structuralism; their odd way of using the word 'semiotics' gives them away. They seem to be operating under pressure, as though James would not be taken seriously unless linked to current literary theory. It's a false pressure. Although they finally do challenge Wynter's claims about the primacy of 'epistemic violence' by the essay's end, the damage has been done. Her quest for 'pluri-dimensionality' backs them into saying that James's critique of Nkrumah's Ghana, for instance, was an account of the dangerous exposure of fledgling states to 'the culture and values of the West' – an absurd reading of James, and the opposite of the truth, as his chapter 'Lenin and the problem' shows. Always so careful with the facts, the authors falter under the burden of this line until we find them linking James with the existentialists. James loathed them; they represented what was dead and distant and ugly about European intellectuals who lacked the vitality of comic books and Hollywood. It may be hard for Jamesians to admit, but he had much more in common with Camille Paglia than Homi Bhabha.

There is a way of admiring even the problems in this book, though, since, in this case, they are the result of trying to bridge the volume's audiences. The editors are saying, in effect, let us be open to many Jameses, and translate recent issues into the many he took up. From the opening overview by Stuart Hall, through the Trinidadian background provided by Selwyn Cudjoe, into the deeply informative essays of Henry at the end, the book gives us quality in abundance. It is easily the best single secondary source available on James, and not just for students of the Caribbean.

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The Patient Impatience

By TOMAS BORGE (Willimantic, CT, Curbstone Press, 1992). 452pp. $24.95.

In his autobiographical work, *The Patient Impatience*, Tomas Borge, former minister of the interior in Nicaragua and sole surviving member of the founding FSLN leadership, describes the militants of his revolution as 'poets of action'. This book of his life and struggle in an ironic way reverses that dictum, and becomes the action of poetry.

It is not only because Borge spends so many pages recalling and celebrating the poet-revolutionaries who have been his comrades and inspiration – figures like the Salvadorean Roque Dalton, the Argentinian Julio Cortazar or Nicaraguans like Ernesto Cardenal or the martyr-bard Leonel Rugama who wrote: 'Every poet must back with their actions every word they write.' It is also that he conceives his life story as a poem in itself, a prose-Lycidas, an act of tribute, love and celebration to the life and work of the pioneer revolutionary Carlos Fonseca – like Borge, a native of Matagalpa and, after Sandino himself, the life-blood example to the Nicaraguan people: 'groping his way by light of fireflies, Carlos achieves his full status as a strategist and leader.'

Thus, *The Patient Impatience* is as much about Fonseca and other Nicaraguan heroes and patriots as it is about the soul and exploits of Borge. It is also an account written in modesty and self-effacement about a personality who is unconceitedly monumental – in the same vein as Cabezas' *Fire from the Mountain*. The agony and pain of the armed struggle – the fiascos and victories – are expressed as part of the creative force any human being must summon up in order to 'clear the way for hope' and begin to transform their portion of the earth. This huge task is one of the imagination, but the imagination becoming reality. This is what Borge communicates so vividly – to move from an imagined earth to one which men and women freely renew together:

'Our labour is not for the purpose of grinding ourselves up in the mill of alienation and selfishness. Labour must be for the purpose of creating material value for the renewal of human beings.'

So much of this book impels you to write its sentences over every wall close to you, to bedeck your classroom with its words. 'I'll love life as if each minute were a new resurrection', declares Borge. When he writes about Nicaragua's revolution creating a 'new aesthetic', he also manifests it. He describes the poet Carlos Martinez Rivas as having 'a tongue as fertile as the pollen on the beak of a humming bird', and affirms every life given up to create the new Nicaragua by setting down: 'the enemy said we were all dead and not one of us was dead.' In this sense, Borge makes no distinction between the dead and living of those who took up Sandino's legacy and that of his 'crazy little army'. *The Patient Impatience* becomes a long hymn to life itself and the eternal struggle for its betterment – with the theory and practice which achieves it.

It is also an epochal book. It comes out of a certain cluster of years, a conjunction and interaction of Latin American and Caribbean genius and determination in Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua and El Salvador, but also linked in a chain with Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola and Grenada. Borge, in a way, speaks as a human who is part of all these processes – his self-criticism ('I contributed my share of mistakes and intransigent attitudes'), his audacity merged with that 'patient impatience', his loyalty and love for his comrades, his capacity for the extremes of sadness and joy, his stamina, his compression of 'too much life in too short a time' – all these traits characterised the lives of the builders and makers of the falls of dictatorships and national democratic revolutions on three continents that sprang to effervescent life and anti-imperialist will during the decades of the 1960s, '70s and early '80s. Borge's book helps us to remember and never forget the wholeness and humanity of that shared culture.

It is a book of genuine yet eccentric inspiration, racked with humour, irony, slapstick, paradoxes and an occasional sense of the absurd – all of which were a part of the clandestine struggle and acts of daring and the incredible that it involved: 'one has to be half-mad to defy imperialism and the National Guard', quips Borge. Yet it is deadly serious too, as serious as life itself, a working out of the early statute of the New Nicaragua Movement which Borge helped to form – to 'combat contempt for the people' wherever it shows itself. Its writing is a supreme act of social love and integrity, for 'if a poet is faithful to his people and faithful to poetry, he is honest, and that, in almost anyone, leads to revolution'.

Optimistic, too – but we need that in these times that have come after the years described in Borge's book and the setbacks that followed the victory. For its message beats in the head and heart of the

reader, educating consciousness and preparation for daily action, like poetry itself, as 'a whetstone for sharpening and not a precipice to despair' – reminding us that 'people were born to live their lives, not be suspended in meaninglessness'.

Read it. Then read it again tomorrow.

Sheffield   CHRIS SEARLE

Post-military Society

By MARTIN SHAW (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991). 229pp. £10.95 paper.

Over the past few years, the world has been changing at an incredible pace, with customary landmarks, such as the Soviet Union, disappearing from view altogether. To comprehend these changes and make sense of the 'new world order' that is emerging is one of the most important tasks facing the Left today. What contribution does this book make?

Essentially, Martin Shaw argues that militarism is of declining importance in the advanced industrial countries and that what could be emerging is a post-military society. The end of the cold war, with the collapse of 'militarised socialism', had opened up new possibilities for progress towards a safer, more peaceful world. While his emphasis on the importance of war in the twentieth century and his incredulity at its neglect in social and cultural studies can be shared, what is less certain is the validity of his own prognosis.

For Shaw, militarism is essentially a question of the power and influence of the military establishment and the pervasiveness of military values. This is too narrow an account, as is clearly demonstrated by his own somewhat perverse suggestion that nuclear weapons have actually caused partial demilitarisation because they have ended reliance on conventional mass armies. His is a crude sociological definition of militarism, dependent on percentages of young men conscripted into the armed forces and the extent to which they are conditioned by militaristic values to accept this fate. A more political approach would also take into account a state's preparedness for, and proclivity to, wage war, and the fact that both these conditions can be satisfied by professional, even mercenary, armed forces, rather than conscript armies. Far from the nuclear arsenal leading to demilitarisation, it changed the character of militarism.

His sociological account of militarism leads him into an almost embarrassing endorsement of the advanced industrial world, to a vision of a global industrial economy, modelled on the EC, which will effectively outlaw war. Such a development is not inevitable, he sagely

notes; nevertheless, his argument is very much that this is the direction in which developments are taking us. It is even possible, he argues, to foresee a situation where the richer, more powerful half of world society will undertake 'a hitherto unthinkable pacification of the Third World as well'. This is, it is worth noting, written *after* the Gulf war.

What is wrong with his analysis? First of all, it is possible seriously to question his notion of a harmonious global industrial economy emerging from the cold war era. This is not a new idea. Some marxists argued that a similar development was taking place – just before the outbreak of the first world war. They, like Shaw, identified certain tendencies, but failed to consider those working in the opposite direction, working towards conflict rather than cooperation. With this in mind, it is much more likely that the next century will see the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States replaced by increasing conflict between Germany, Japan and America, with Russia as a minor player. This conflict is already in evidence economically and the lesson of history is that it is only a matter of time before it takes on a military form. Not necessarily total war, but certainly military preparedness and perhaps military competition, accompanied by war by proxy, will be the form taken by relations between these powers.

A second criticism can be made of his analysis, even in the unlikely event of his being right about relations between the industrial states and the emergence of a global industrial society: its relations with the Third World. While Shaw's view of relations between the industrial powers is utopian, his attitude towards the Third World is positively reactionary.

For Shaw, the Third World is very much the fly-in-the-ointment. This is not because of its exploitation and domination by the industrial powers – the United States, in particular – but because it remains the stronghold of classical militarism, of mass armies and is the seat of continual wars. It will be necessary for the advanced world to police this troubled area if the safety of the world is to be secured.

What of the role of the US in the Third World? How does Shaw incorporate this into his argument? Let us look at the war that the US waged through its contra mercenaries against Nicaragua. This was a conflict wholly inspired by the US that would never have taken place without its sponsorship and without its money and weapons. It was an act of unprovoked aggression in complete violation of international law, but the passing mention that Shaw gives it refers to it as a 'civil war'. Or what of the war in El Salvador, where, once again, the US has sponsored a conflict that has cost tens of thousands of lives, where US-trained, armed and financed death squads have killed countless civilians including priests, nuns and, of course, Archbishop Romero? Apparently, in El Salvador a substantial guerrilla threat has produced 'serious militarisation'. Shaw's concern is not with the politics of these

conflicts, but with incorporating them into his thesis concerning militarism in the Third World. What needs to be explained, of course, is the involvement of US militarism and, on this, he has nothing to contribute. This is a sociology for the politically neutered.

Which brings us inevitably to his discussion of the Gulf war. Here we have the ritual propagandist comparison of Saddam Hussein with Adolf Hitler and the somewhat glib reassurance that the war is only a hiccup 'in the long decline and transformation of militarism'. The Middle East, like Central America, is unfortunately not susceptible to comprehension by means of Shaw's sociology. Once again, we have the US imposing its will on a Third World state, formerly an ally, not in the interests of justice or freedom, but of oil. Moreover, the war had an unmistakable colonial aspect to it, with the technologically superior western power and its allies suffering derisory casualties while the troops of its Third World opponent were effectively massacred. From this point of view, the 'new world order' of the 1990s looks suspiciously like the old world order of the 1890s.

What we have with Shaw's book is a study that tells us considerably more about the academic world's susceptibility to the ideology of 'the new world order' than it does about developments in the contemporary world. We must look elsewhere for an understanding of the changes and transformations taking place around us.

Bath College of Higher Education   JOHN NEWSINGER

Women's Voices on Africa: a century of travel writings

Edited by PATRICIA W. ROMERO (Princeton and New York, Markus Winer Publishing, 1992). 280pp. $14.95 paper.

Mary Kingsley, Imperial Adventuress

By DEA BIRKETT (London, Macmillan Press, 1992). 213pp. £25.00

If the figure of the imperial lady traveller had not existed – well, nobody should have been very much surprised. When middle-class women's scope at home was so restricted, it is remarkable that, by travelling abroad, so many should have found a way, however indirect, into men's worlds of exploration, natural science, anthropology and ethnography, and political agitation. Having done so, they provided an enduring stereotype through which we still express ideas about aspects of race and gender in our history. They are the pith-helmeted, stout-skirted, butterfly-net bearing subjects of Jane Robinson's biographical compendium, *Wayward Women* (1990), and of Dea Birkett's scholarly and readable *Spinsters Abroad* (1989) which provides a context for her study of Mary Henrietta Kingsley, one of

the best known of these venturers and author of *Travels in West Africa, Congo Français, Corisco and Cameroons* (1897, currently in print) and *West African Studies* (1900, the year of her death).

Patricia Romero presents selections from the work of eleven women from the 1850s to the 1950s, including missionaries, a royal visitor (Princess Marie Louise on the Gold Coast in 1925), a 'colonial wife' (Anne Louise Hay Dundas on Tanganyika, 1921), as well as women who went to Africa for pleasure. A description by Katherine Fannin of Italian colonial life in Abyssinia in 1934 covers unfamiliar territory, while the selection from Margery Perham's *African Apprenticeship* (1929) touches on the political situation and the condition of 'native' labour in South Africa, as well as her honestly expressed fears and prejudices. Earlier travellers include the Australian Mary Eliza Bakewell Gaunt (*Alone in West Africa*, 1912), Mary Hall, author of *A Woman's Trek from the Cape to Cairo* (1907), and Mary Kingsley, represented by passages on a visit to a French mission on the Ogooué river in Gabon, and others which highlight her acerbic views on European involvement in West Africa, the role of missionaries, and the nature of African society, to which she attributed order and meaning. Romero's first author, Anna Martin Hinderer, a missionary wife in Abeokuta and Ibadan in the 1850s and '60s and author of *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country*, was more resident than traveller. Given her commitment to the conversion of Africans, both Muslim and 'pagan', the picture she gives of the encounter of Yoruba culture and Christian endeavour has a measure of objectivity as well as ingenuous warmth, and could be used in teaching Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

The American May Mott-Smith's account of social relations between colonisers and colonised in Nigeria in the 1920s is typical of those of many women, in that their unofficial standing and frequent lack of self-critique allow them to speak 'innocently' and, at the same time, to reveal more about Empire than they realised. At times, the customs of the observing Europeans themselves come under scrutiny, as when she describes a meal taken outside a village house: 'It was time for chop. The capable Davis [her African interpreter] produced out of the box a tablecloth, knives and forks, meat pie, bread and butter, canned fruit, soda, beer and gin. All of Iju watched us eat.' Anne Louise Dundas's remark, of the becalmed colonial social life of 1920s Tanganyika, that 'there are practically no "class" distinctions save those of colour and race', echoes Birkett's point that the contradictions of gender were eclipsed by the primacy of the travellers' status, once in Africa, as white women, or often, like Kingsley, as 'honorary' white men.

Women's interior motivation to travel is explored in detail in *Spinsters Abroad*, and the subtleties of Mary Kingsley's comedic and problematical construction of herself as an 'explorer' are more fully understood in its light. She made her first journey to Africa while in

mourning for her parents, and first adopted the 'feminine' identity of a 'collector'. Throughout her short career (she died of typhus aged 38 while nursing Boer prisoners of war), she emphasised the fact that she had been an exemplary daughter, stressing the 'respectability' which was a common preoccupation among these women. Her exaggerations and distortions about this, as about her journeys themselves, their dangerousness and her unique achievements, do not detract from the interest of her life as an 'anti-colonialist imperialist' who believed that British power should be exercised through trade rather than by a local British administration. Birkett's narrative draws heavily on Kingsley's letters to her allies in the Liverpool and Manchester chambers of commerce, and to her opponents, Joseph Chamberlain and Frederick Lugard, later governor general of Nigeria, as well as on the press response to her political ideas and public persona. She adds quasi-fictional 'reconstructions' which may seem to jar in a book which has an academic apparatus.

There are many suggestive points of contact between the two books reviewed here, not least that between Kingsley and the politically influential colonial historian, Margery Perham, Lugard's biographer, seen here at the outset of her career in Africa. Like many others, Kingsley saw Africa in terms of her childhood reading of white male explorers – Speke, Stanley, Burton, Du Chaillu – while delighting in her first-hand experiences: bathing naked in Lake Nkové, on the Remboé River, and writing of her impatience 'until I smell again the heavy rank land smell, see the blue ocean turn cocoa colour in a sharp line and hear the music of the thunder of Bonny Bar'. Perham, the most academic of the women quoted, writes of her first visit, to British Somaliland: 'It provided the perfect stage in which to play the romantic role of which I had dreamed as a child. I delighted even in the costume needed then for the part I was playing – the high leather boots, the breeches ... above all the rifle over the shoulder and the pistol under the pillow.' It is this sort of zestful enjoyment that makes these women's writing so attractive. Its negative aspect is that, informal and accessible, it helped to naturalise into the popular imagination the 'commonsense' racist truths of those who, with often limited experience, 'knew their Africa'.

University of Greenwich   IMOGEN FORSTER

The Retreat of Scientific Racism: changing concepts of race in Britain and the United States between the world wars

By ELAZAR BARKAN (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991). 381pp. £37.50.

As we have been reminded by the recent flood of literature on 1492, racism is pretty much a universal characteristic of the epoch of modernity. Indeed, some of the more arcane contemporary theories now propose that the very project of modernity itself – founded on the transcendent categories of white Europe and its civilisation – has been formed irretrievably by an all-encompassing dynamic of racism. Often, empirical historical research will bear this out: the recurring structures of racist discourses – establishing the symbolic boundaries between us and them; reason and unreason; civilisation and chaos; humanity and animality – do indeed possess a long history. But this is not to say that the same old racism has been in place since the beginning of history, equally at work in the earliest manifestations of genocide as in today's late capitalist societies.

Any good history or politics requires a more carefully specified response, in which the shifting configurations of particular racial and ethnic discourses can be unravelled. The difficulty which this brings is that any attempt to deconstruct the dominant category of 'white' is caught both by its intoxicatingly powerful presence and (from its bearers at least) by its denial: historically, white has been experienced by whites precisely as transcendent, forced into visibility only negatively – in times of crisis – as that which is not its Other. Thus, any history of white ethnicity and racism has to reach deep into white cultures, drawing out a range of buried, barely visible connections which allow us, in retrospect, to grasp the specificities of white identities, to understand their internal coherence and to see how they worked.

Elazar Barkan has written a sober, useful account of a key shift in the intellectual culture of the twentieth century, focusing on the decomposition of the scientific concept of race – one crucial effect of which, he argues, was to free culture from biology. He looks at developments in the United States and Britain, taking as his object the disciplines of anthropology and biology. It is informative, lucid and ambitious.

The study begins with confirmation of the extraordinary chaos which underpinned the putatively scientific categories of race, allowing what from our historical perspective appears to be a bizarre brew of bigotry and fantasy to pass itself off as serious scholarly investigation. He identifies three groups of intellectuals who were instrumental in transforming our understanding of race and ethnicity, substituting a cultural relativism for the absolutism of genetics. The first group is

composed of the 'British' anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (with the marxist archaeologist Gordon Childe slipped in as well); the second comprised the renowned human biologists who, in Britain in the 1930s, turned their discipline away from the dominant paradigm of eugenics: J.B.S. Haldane, Lancelot Hogben, Lionel Penrose and Julian Huxley. In pursuing his case, Barkan is careful to demonstrate that the intellectual break instigated by each figure was complex and contradictory; in a fascinating account of Julian Huxley, for example, he shows how the shift from an explicitly racist eugenics to a more relativist and historical sense of the construction of racial structures could evolve within the one person.

The central focus of the story, and easily its most engaging section, falls on the figure of Franz Boas and the group of anthropologists who formed around him at Columbia University in the first half of the twentieth century – most prominently, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Melville Herskovits. Formed intellectually light-years away from the traditions of Anglo-Saxon empiricism, Boas early on trained in Heidelberg under the influence of Dilthey. On moving to the United States, he became absorbed professionally and publicly in debates about immigration (he was once called upon to adjudicate whether Armenians were 'Caucasian' or 'Oriental'), and became increasingly drawn to an anti-racist politics, active literally to the moment of his death in 1942. Clearly, there was a romantic ardour to his group, one admirer in the 1920s seeing the only choices for her generation as comprising flight to Paris, hawking the *Daily Worker* or taking up anthropology. Whatever the enormity of the shift inside the discipline of anthropology effected by these intellectuals, the wider resonances are still with us: one need only think of Boas's influence on Nora Zeale Hurston or later, in the wake of civil rights and the Black Panthers, Margaret Mead's *Rap on Race* with James Baldwin.

Barkan, however, pays little or no attention to such developments. His is an approach deeply internal to the academic disciplines he studies. The debates on race which were burning through the black and anti-colonial movements barely impinge on his story. The wider history – the Nazi assumption of power in Germany and Italy's invasion of Abyssinia are taken to be the key moments – remains annoyingly nebulous. The complex of historical events which first broke up the epistemological and subjective certainties of race were more varied and far-reaching than Barkan allows. To grasp this complexity would require a different sort of book, more alive to the subterranean movements of history which were slowly beginning to undermine the cultural authority of the white man.

University of East London   BILL SCHWARZ

Missing in Action and Presumed Dead

By RASHIDAH ISMAILI (Trenton, New Jersey, Africa World Press Inc., 1992). 100pp. $24.95 cloth, $9.95 paper.

Rashidah Ismaili is an African-American poet in the fullest sense of the term. She was born in Dahomey and spent many of her early years in Nigeria before settling permanently in New York over twenty years ago. She teaches at Rutgers university and has written plays as well as poems and often works in collaboration with musicians like Abdullah Ibrahiam. Her second volume of poetry, *Missing in Action and Presumed Dead*, is an impassioned sequence of impressions and sagas, remembered moments and invented lives, set both in her motherland and her adoptive home. Pain and loss are seen as common experiences that are met with strength and resilience in both lands. It is starkly effective when occasionally she describes disbelief and confusion masked by silence. She is inspired by jazz and by African rhythms, and the steady beat behind the carefully crafted words is enlivened by improvisational playing with ideas and structures. Her poems sing out a succinctly contained evocation of the whole African diaspora. At their core lies a rare truth and honesty.

In this brilliant sequence of poems, Rashidah Ismaili moves easily from the particular to the collective voice. Just as surely, the poems stalk through the streets of Harlem and swing into Africa without breaking the inner sense of continuity. Time is as quickly transcended as space, as she speaks of the poverty of modern urban America and the horror of snatching Africans into slavery and forcing them to endure the middle passage. The plight of the dispossessed is marked out for the kind of close attention that impels re-evaluative thought while totally avoiding sentimentality. With only rare exceptions, complexity is eschewed in favour of a powerful simplicity.

She does, nevertheless, juxtapose images with subtlety and great impact. She sees art and politics as inseparable, but her poems are not impacted into any obvious political message. She feels it is enough to place one set of historical and contemporary circumstances against another. It is the sensitive use of language that creates the emotional impact. In 'Meanwhile', war is ironically linked to urban deprivation and isolation and is given a universality of meaning by the intermediary reference to loneliness:

> Meanwhile:
>> Bombs split jungle stillness and babies
>> look for arms familiar and warm to cover
>> their fear and comfort and their hunger
>>> and

Meanwhile:
>   Each pair of eyes lower in morning light.
>   Each finger stuck and stinking from night
>   upon night without women to warm arthritic
>   backs and spotted lungs. Each mouth tells
>   the same story. Loneliness is familiar
>   and

Meanwhile:
>   In a tent with current T.V. comes to shine
>   out the moon. Progress is measured by
>   channels and movie houses and the pride
>   each item costs. It is indeed a better
>   time and place to be serving one's life.
>   Each rug is an inviolate pallet.

Rashidah Ismaili has an understanding heart. She knows many people well, she listens to her friends and acquaintances with loving, observing eyes and learns about the feelings that cannot be explained. She also watches perceptively the people who pass her by in the streets of Harlem, she sees and accepts without being judgmental. In 'Wanderers-Z' she paints a vivid outline of a homeless woman:

>   Her aura is instituted grey walls,
>   Her movements are limited.
>   Her eyes clouded, distal
>   Her voice conspiratorial,
>   Her scratching incessant.
>   This is a woman of the street.

Like the dispossessed of Africa, this woman is mourned as a victim of exploitative greed and the lack of any egalitarian sense of communal responsibility. As she points out in 'Nowhere', 'Individuality is fairly recent'. In these sensitive and moving poems, Rashidah Ismaili has captured some of the essence and meaning of those discarded by colonialism and capitalism. She has provided a memorial for those who would otherwise be forgotten.

University of Keele   MARY ELLISON

A Shield of Coolest Air

By MARION MOLTENO (London, Shola Books, 1992). 338pp.
£7.95 paper.

This is a love story, and a story about growth, which all good love
stories should be. Rachel is a small-town Afrikaner woman who,
alienated by the 'inhuman certainties' in the radical politics of her
photo-journalist husband, nevertheless joins him in exile in London
after his brief, but unpleasant, encounter with the South African
security forces. She wonders resentfully why she did so as he, taken up
by celebrity activists, begins a hectic world-straddling career and she is
left to bring up the children in cold, cramped, grey London.

Hassan, a refugee case-worker, is also displaced. A child in Somalia,
he was brought to London as a teenager by his English mother, who
loved her husband but could never come to terms with his infinite
hospitality to cousins and nephews twenty times removed, and his ever-
open doors which allowed no privacy. Hassan is the child of this
contradiction between Somali warmth and English reserve. Through
their growing relationship, the two of them learn to trust themselves,
recognise and grow through their fears and contradictions, and become
more truly themselves.

But the love story, compelling as it is, sometimes gets in the way of
the complementary and, to my mind, more important theme. Through
Rachel's friendship with two Somali women she meets in her children's
school playground, and through Hassan's work and personal anguish,
we become aware both of the desperate struggle against the dictator
Siad Barre in Somalia – Hassan's father is imprisoned by the regime
for his reckless anger at the behaviour of the security forces – and the
seeds of the present civil war there. We are instructed in the callousness
with which refugees coming to Britain are treated. And the book charts
the growth of a small, local community campaign, whose aim is to
force the Home Office to allow the children of asylum-seekers to join
their parents here. We see the communities coming together; from a
tiny band preparing leaflets and stuffing envelopes in Rachel's front
room, to an overflowing meeting of parents and refugees at the local
school, with plans for demonstrations ahead.

It is a pity that, at times, this story takes second place to the love
story, to divert what should be a collective affirmation into a private
one. There are, too, some puzzling silences even within the pre-
dominant narrative: we are told nothing of the husband's political
activities, of the struggle in South Africa, of which he was undeniably a
part. In a book which is also about the need to make connections, the
author's silence on the events in her heroine's homeland strikes as a
strange omission. Rachel's own relationship with that homeland, to
which she returns near the end of the book to visit her dying aunt, is

confined to awakened memories of the physical desire experienced as a child in South Africa to reach out and touch black crinkly hair; of her childhood anger that the maid could not have her child with her in the servants' quarters, and of the comfortable warmth she used to feel ensconced quietly in those quarters as servants from neighbouring houses gathered to gossip, laugh and imitate their white mistresses. Such small acts of friendship and solidarity are important, no one would argue with that – but there is, too, a larger tale whose inclusion would have enriched the more personal, human story.

No review of this book would be complete without mention of the Somali poetry in translation with which it is peppered: poetry of love, of war, of survival. The title is from one such extract:

> Now you depart, and though your way may lead
> Through airless forests thick with hagar trees,
> Through places steeped in heat, stifling and dry,
> Where breath comes hard, and no fresh breeze can reach
> Yet may God place a shield of coolest air
> Between your body and the assailant sun...

London   FRANCES WEBBER

Distant Voices

By JOHN PILGER (London, Vintage, 1992). 397pp. £6.99.

Distant Voices, a collection of essays by the London-based journalist John Pilger, first published in the *New Statesman*, the *Guardian* and the *Independent*, is divided into nine sections. Each deals with a Pilger passion, ranging from Cambodia, Australia, the Gulf war and Britain's 'nation within a nation', to a section entitled 'Tributes' and another 'On the road', on places and people that have fascinated him. That Pilger's journalism is immediate, inquisitorial and committed, few would dispute. (Just three essays here, on the miners, on UN complicity in the rehabilitation of the Khmer Rouge and on British arms sales to Iraq, set out his investigative credentials.) But, in another sense, Pilger is a twentieth-century travel writer at a time when tourism and television have largely rendered the traditional travelogue obsolete.

The face of imperialism today is changing, and there is that other war, on the economic front this time, to report from. In 'The silent war', an impassioned plea against Third World debt, Pilger describes the lives of two slum dwellers in the Philippines. But, whereas Eddie and Terisita are scavengers, rummaging through the rubbish tips of Smokey Mountain for pieces of glass, tin and plastic, Pilger is a scavenger for facts. Like Noam Chomsky, whom he greatly admires

and has written about in 'Tributes', Pilger scours every item of news, every document that comes to his attention, for those facts that throw light on the insanity of war and the darkness of imperialism.

With Pilger, facts do not simply accumulate; they come to life, counterposed against the experiences of ordinary people. Even Pilger's own feelings are mined as a means of shaping facts into truth for his readership. In 'Return to Year Zero', Pilger describes a recurring nightmare he experiences in Cambodia. His friend Chay Song Heng, a former prisoner of the Khmer Rouge, analyses the dream and tells Pilger that he has sensed the 'fear that is present in Cambodia, where we are a people walking around like sleepwalkers in a world shaped by the shadows of our past and by forces from outside, never by ourselves'. The point is that, with any other journalist, the use of the first person, the 'I', would be intrusive; to recount a disturbing dream in the face of Cambodia's collective suffering, self-indulgent. Pilger, however, dwells on his own perceptions and sensations to bring to his readership the inscape of fact and so render reality more real.

But this is the twentieth century, when facts are commodities, information is power. As Pilger sees it, 'Our "New Age" is to be an information society, the product of a "communications revolution" … But this is a fraud. We are in danger of mistaking media for information, of being led into a media society in which unrestricted information is unwelcome, even a threat.' Pilger, as a journalist on the *Daily Mirror* (pre-Maxwell) and as an Australian who knows Rupert Murdoch's media empire inside out, is well-qualified to hammer home the message of media power, not only to disinform but to desensitise. During the Gulf war, television 'erected an emotional screen between us and reality, and our sensibilities are adjusted accordingly', he writes in his brilliant essay, 'Video nasties'.

For Pilger, the overriding duty of a journalist is to act as a 'teller of truths', a 'whistle blower in the public interest' – a practice which his own career exemplifies. And, because he is humble enough to consider himself as simply serving the public interest on behalf of all those who do not have access to the controllers of information, Pilger remains uncorrupted. He is the first to recognise the tremendous debt he owes to other people's researches, the campaigns and organisations that have worked unstintingly to provide the facts – Third World Resurgence, the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, are just a few of the many mentioned here – but can find few outlets and are, for the time being at least, 'distant voices'.

Institute of Race Relations   LIZ FEKETE

Standing Proud: writings from prison and the story of his struggle for freedom
By JOE DOHERTY (New York, National Committee for Joe Doherty, 1991). 133pp.

On 19 February 1992, following nearly nine years of legal struggle in US courts and a January decision by the Supreme Court that he did not have the right to apply for political asylum in the US, Joseph Doherty was removed from his cell in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and deported to England, whence he was taken to Crumlin road gaol in Belfast. *Standing Proud* presents, together with biographical and legal introductions by Mary Bringle, a collection of essays and poems written by Doherty from his cell block on the ninth floor of the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York. These writings first appeared in Irish and Irish-American publications as well as in the form of solidarity messages to other political struggles and their partisans and martyrs, such as the Puerto Rican prisoners in Hartford, the murdered Salvadorean archbishop Oscar Romero, and Nelson Mandela on the occasion of his release from prison in South Africa. In the volume's first essay, '1968: hopes and dreams that were', the Irish prisoner in the United States maps the historical and geographical parameters, at once nationalist and internationalist, of both his political career and his prison writing: the politics in the streets of Paris, Prague, Atlanta and Belfast. 'I became a part of '68 – its effects and its aftermath.' The 1960s function here, however, less as a 'lost world' than as a spatial and temporal conjuncture. As Doherty writes, 'My story is not unique. It is a story of the beginning of a new era in contemporary Ireland, a partial explanation of the tragic events of today.'

The subsequent essays in *Standing Proud* go on to link that era and those events both to larger global changes and the immediate demands of occasion, comparing Ireland's history to that of Haiti, appealing to the issue of self-determination by contrast with the situation of Lithuania in May 1990, and reasserting, on its 200th anniversary, the example of the US Bill of Rights:

> My imprisonment is not without purpose, if it serves as a rallying point for the concern for civil rights. It is fitting that it should, for what better way to celebrate 200 years of constitutional struggle than to seek to protect the rights of an Irish citizen who has fought so that his country may finally have what you have so long had here: freedom, independence, a Constitution and a Bill of Rights.

The denied rights of the Irish citizen are described in essays on death squads in Belfast, strip searching of Irish prisoners in British prisons, Constance Markievicz and the importance of feminism to the struggle, and articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution: 'the only legal provisions in which the partition of Ireland is recognised and confronted'.

On 12 May 1990, Doherty published an article on the 'Irish hunger strikes'. Nine years earlier, on 5 May 1981, Bobby Sands had died after sixty-six days on a hunger strike. Nine other prisoners were to follow. The strike had been called by republican prisoners in the H blocks demanding restoration of their political status, withdrawn in 1976 as part of Britain's policy of 'criminalisation' of the Irish struggle. When the strike was ended on 3 October 1981, 217 days after it had begun, only a semblance of the prisoners' demands had been acceded to by the British government, but the projected criminalisation had produced its own counter-effect, with the active and popular participation of the republican movement in the political process. While on hunger strike, Bobby Sands was elected to Parliament as MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone, and the debate within Sinn Fein over the armalite and the ballot box was given a new dynamic.

In the meantime, however, on the night of Sands's death, Joe Doherty was in Crumlin road gaol awaiting transfer to the H block, having 'resolved, if need be, to follow Sands's course'. When Sands's death brought the negotiations between the prisoners and the government to an end, Doherty and eight other IRA prisoners escaped from Crumlin road. Doherty fled to the United States, where he was eventually arrested by FBI agents on 18 June 1983. Two months later, the British government lodged a request for his extradition. In the eight years of litigation that followed, Doherty and his attorneys won their every court hearing, only to have the decisions overturned by the US Justice Department and the attorney general. Anticipating the eventual appeal to the Supreme Court, Doherty had written on 2 March 1991, in his regular 'Letter from the cell block' in *The Irish People*, 'while I acknowledge the people's confident outlook that Supreme Court will finally review the case and let judicial process win the day, I must nonetheless take a grim view of a court whose record lately on constitutional rights requires one to be cautiously pessimistic'.

When Joseph Doherty arrived in England in late February 1992, the Dublin government was contesting the right of a 14-year-old rape victim to seek an abortion. Sinn Fein had just been denied by that same government its traditional venue of the Mansion House as the site of its annual Ard Fheis. Days later, Westminster renewed the Prevention of Terrorism Act. And articles 2 and 3 were again a subject of discussion in the twenty-six counties. Meanwhile, in the US, the organisers of the 1992 New York Saint Patrick's Day parade, even as they elected Joseph Doherty as their honorary grand marshall, denied the right to march to the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organisation. Partition, once a territorial imperative with a political agenda, had discovered still another implementation, in the denial of participation; 'standing proud', in the political process to those applicants from 'beyond the pale'.

University College, Galway   BARBARA HARLOW

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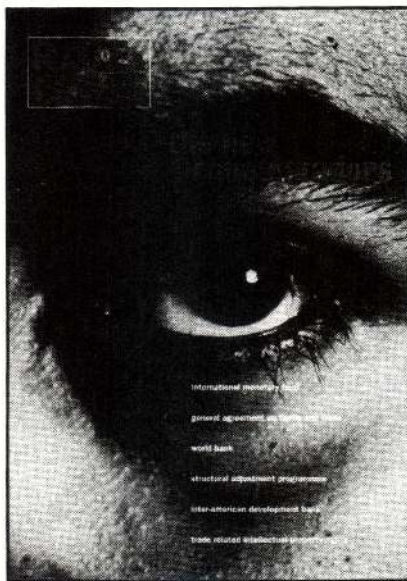
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