

**RACE &
CLASS**



*Columbus and
the origins of racism*

JAN CAREW

Destabilisation in Nicaragua and Mozambique
Female sensibility in Jamaican poetry
Festivals of the oppressed
Uprising in Gaza

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Cover picture of the death of Hatuey, an Arawak chief, from Las Casas' *Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies, 1552.*
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Columbus and the origins of racism in the Americas: part one*

On the morning of 12 October 1492, a gathering of Arawakian Lucayos discovered Christopher Columbus and his sailors on the eastern shore of their island homeland of Guanahani. The curiosity of the Lucayos had been aroused since the night before when fishermen, spearing fish off the reefs that circled Guanahani like coral necklaces, had seen lights dancing above the waves far out to sea. Intrigued and bewildered, the fishermen had hurried back to report this strange phenomenon to their Cacique and he had posted lookouts on high promontories to keep watch until daybreak. It was the season of the new moon when the brightest starlight could not penetrate the heavy mantle of darkness that had spread over the land and seascapes of Guanahani. Throughout the night, Columbus' caravels remained invisible and only the dancing lights could be seen like low stars suspended between the night sky and the heaving sea. The lights faded out and vanished when morning filled the sky and the caravels, the *Nina*, *Pinta* and *Santa Maria*, appeared against a steel blue horizon. The Lucayo sentries shouted the news that strange vessels driven by skirts capturing the wind and billowing around tall poles were heading towards Guanahani.

A cautious crowd, apprehensive but drawn irresistibly by wonder and curiosity, gathered under tall pine trees that verged on the white sandy beach. A boat, ribbed like the skeleton of a fish and rowed by bearded

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strangers, was grounded and hauled high up on the sand to avoid the backward tug of the foaming surf. The first one to spring ashore was a tall man with a pink complexion, hair as white as tiger orchids and sky blue eyes. The ones who followed him were swarthy, their hair and beards were unkempt and their dark eyes shone like polished obsidian knives with an excitement that they could barely suppress. The way in which the others deferred to the one who had first sprung ashore made it clear to the onlookers that he was the leader. The strangers all walked awkwardly as though sea swells were still heaving under them, and they held colourful banners aloft on polished poles. At first, they were cautious and their eyes darted hither and thither as though every wild sea grape and tropical pine housed some hidden menace. They were armed with long thin knives, daggers and gleaming sticks. But when they saw that their hosts were unarmed, curious and far from belligerent, the interlopers set about performing a strange ritual. Shouting discordant orisons to propitiate their gods, they fell upon their knees. And, when the leader stood up once more, he raised his shining knife to the sun and spoke in the sonorous tones of a shaman making declarations of loyalty to the Sky God.

In that first momentous encounter between Indian hosts and Spanish guests, between a people who called themselves 'The Human Beings' and 'The Human Persons' and the bearded strangers from lands beyond the sunrise who were convinced that they were a chosen people, there were hesitant attempts at verbal exchanges but no one understood what the other was trying to say. Later, when the Lucayo Cacique came aboard the *Santa Maria* bringing gifts, he tried to tell Columbus that 'The Old Ones', who were their traditional rememberers, storytellers and guardians of the culture, had often enthralled them with tales of bearded strangers who had sailed to their islands from beyond the rising sun. But, he had hastened to add that in his own experience and in that of his immediate forebears, Columbus and his sailors were the first of the hairy sea-rovers they had actually encountered. Columbus, for his part, tried to explain to him that he had come in the name of the sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella, and that in their royal name he was laying claim to all lands that he touched upon in this venture across the ocean sea. Theirs were like voices issuing from an ancient Egyptian mural in which the faces looked outwards in opposite directions, for they did not understand a single word of each other's language. In the accounts that Lucayo eyewitnesses gave to eager listeners at home and to visitors from neighbouring islands, they would invariably add that, but for the rules of decorum, there were moments when looking at these bearded strangers and observing their antics, they had had to make a great effort not to burst out laughing.

* * *

These innocents had no inkling of how deadly serious Columbus' game of 'discovery' and colonisation would turn out to be. And when they found out, it was too late. In Columbus' *Journal*, the document that provides us with his account of his first voyage and of the historic landing on 12 October, the events were described somewhat differently. All of this has come down to us second hand – 'The original holograph copy of the *Journal* had come into the possession of a remarkable friar, Bartolomé de las Casas, a friend of Columbus'.¹ Las Casas thought that the *Journal* in its pristine form was prolix, discursive and full of sycophantic references to the Spanish sovereigns, and he edited it severely. Charles Duff, in *The Truth about Columbus*, wrote: 'It is a pity that the ... original ... *Journal* ... and not the transcription and abridgement by Las Casas, should have come down to us. On the other hand, perhaps Las Casas improved upon the original. We do not know.'² But this imperfect document, with all its shortcomings, nevertheless has become one of the most important in the annals of modern European history.

This is how Columbus' *Journal* described the landing:

At two o'clock in the morning, land was discovered at two leagues distance. They took sail and hove to remaining thus till dawn, which was Friday, when they found they were near a small island (one of the Lucayos) called in the Indian language Guanahani. Presently, they saw naked people ... The Admiral carried the royal standard, and the two captains each a banner of the green cross, which all the ships had for an ensign: it contained an F and Y (for Fernando and Ysabela) one letter on each side of the cross, with a crown over each ... the Admiral called upon the two captains, and the rest of those who sprang ashore, also to Rodrigo de Escovedo notary of the fleet and to Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, to bear faithful witness that before all others he took possession for the King and Queen his sovereigns ...³

The gentle Lucayo onlookers did not know that with the Admiral's solemn declaration, the doomsday clock had moved perilously close to the hour of oblivion for them. For the interlopers it was a glorious beginning, but for the unwitting and hospitable Lucayos, it was the beginning of the end. In less than forty years, Spanish conquistadores, settlers, slave-hunters, disease, hunger and despair would, like harbingers of the Apocalypse, rain death and destruction upon the innocent heads of most of the inhabitants of the Greater Antilles.

Writing about the Lucayos, Columbus had said that they were 'a very handsome race ... their eyes were large and very beautiful, not black, but the colour of the inhabitants of the Canaries ... they were straight

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limbed without exception, and did not have prominent bellies but were handsomely shaped'.⁴ Such were the beautiful people into whose midst Columbus was about to unleash his genocidal policies in the name of the sovereigns of Castille. Ironically, before those idyllic children of nature, the Lucayos and the other Arawakian peoples, had been exterminated, Columbus' glowing accounts about them would inspire Sir Thomas More to fantasise about a perfect human world in his *Utopia*, and Shakespeare to create Caliban, a stereotype of the colonised man and a twisted racist metaphor, in his last play *The Tempest*.

Shakespeare had come to his Caliban/Prospero stereotypes by a somewhat tortuous intellectual route. Giovanni Florio, a personal friend of the Bard from Stratford, had translated Montaigne's essay 'Of the Cannibals' into English in 1608 and given him a copy. That copy, which Shakespeare annotated, is still preserved. Roberto Retamar, the Cuban scholar, wrote in his illuminating essay, 'Caliban' that 'This... proves that [Florio's] book was the direct source of Shakespeare's... *The Tempest*'.⁵ Montaigne had used his essay to chide those who, through ignorance and racial chauvinism, instinctively attached pejorative labels to peoples of different races and whose cultures they did not bother to study. Here are Montaigne's own words: 'There is nothing barbaric or savage in these nations ... what happens is that everyone calls barbaric that which is alien to his customs.'⁶ But Shakespeare had somehow missed the point that Montaigne had made so clearly. His Caliban was instead a creature plucked straight out of the demonised version of the Carib* that Columbus' febrile imagination had invented. Shakespeare, as was the custom at the time, took whole lines from Montaigne's essay, but, using his poetic licence, he took only the lines he wanted in order to create his deformed, racist, stereotype. Retamar made a very valid point when he wrote:

The coloniser's version explains to us that due to the incurable bestiality of the Carib, there was no alternative but to exterminate him. What he does not explain is why, even before the Carib, the peaceful and gentle Arawak was also exterminated. To put it simply, in the one case as in the other, one of the worst instances of ethnocide in recorded history was committed against them both.⁷

The holocaust which engulfed the Lucayos and the other indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean archipelago has been glossed over, ignored and rationalised as an 'inevitable' phenomenon in the exotica of European expansion. Those 'Indians' marked down for doom by

*Note the contradiction between Columbus' idealised vision of the Arawakian people (see above) and his demonised version of the Caribs — two peoples who were indistinguishable, one from the other.

Columbus were not even accorded the dignity of being called by the names they had used to define themselves from time immemorial. Over and over again, up and down the Americas, others must have echoed the cry of that nameless Native American who had asked the Massachusetts missionary John Eliot in 1646: 'Why do you keep calling us Indians?' Robert F. Berkhofer Jr, in his excellent study *The White Man's Indian*, wrote:

Regardless of whether Columbus thought he had landed among the East Indies or among islands near Japan or even elsewhere near the Asian continent, he would probably have used the same all-embracing term for the natives, because 'India' stood as a synonym for all of Asia east of the river Indus ...⁸

The name 'Indian' and the image of the Indian, therefore, were like fruit from the same tree of ignorance, racial arrogance and their attendant bigotry. Berkhofer continued his analysis by stating very aptly:

The initial image of the Indian like the word itself, came from the pen of Columbus. Although neither Columbus nor the converted Jew he took along to act as a translator [this gentleman whose name was Luis de Torres had lived with the Adelantado of Murcia and he knew Hebrew, Chaldaic and some Arabic] understood the language of the islanders they encountered on the first voyage, the Admiral of the Ocean Sea described with confidence in his widely published letter of 1493 the lifestyles of those peoples he called Indians.⁹

Columbus' descriptions of the ontological systems of the Native Americans he encountered were often fictitious and contradictory. At one point in his *Journal*, he tells us in an aside that 'They ... are firmly persuaded that we have come from heaven ...'¹⁰ When asked to comment on this, Las Casas, who knew a great deal more about Native American languages and cultures than did Columbus, had declared that it was somewhat contradictory that the self-proclaimed 'men from heaven' should have been so greedy for gold. Had he even understood a smattering of the Arawakian tongue, Columbus might have discovered that there were folk legends among the Carib and Arawakian peoples about strangers who had sailed to their shores from beyond the rising sun – dark strangers in white robes, bearded ones with pink faces and others who were brown as well-seasoned gourds.

After a month and a half of sailing from island to island in the Antilles, Columbus, in his ardent search for gold, spices and a passage to the Asian mainland, then confessed in a moment of acute frustration that 'I do not know the language and the people of these parts cannot understand me; neither I nor any of my company understand them ... I place little confidence in the Indians I have on board, as several times they have attempted to escape.'¹¹ Columbus' linguistic abilities, in fact,

left much to be desired. Throughout his life, he never penned a single word in his native Italian, and one can assume, quite justifiably from this fact, that he was illiterate when he left Genoa and that he had learnt Spanish, Latin and a smattering of Portuguese as an adult.

Professor Van Sertima, a distinguished linguist, tells us:

In Columbus' *Journal*, gold is given as coa-na, while gua-nin is recorded as an island where there is much gold. Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, the Spanish scholar who travelled with Columbus and who was often appalled by his linguistic blunders, even in his use of Castillian Spanish, wrote in the margin of the *Journal*, correcting Columbus, 'This Guanin is no island but gold which according to the Indians had an odour for which they valued it much.'¹²

* * *

The fallacious claim that Columbus 'discovered' America is one that has brought into being a stubborn neo-creationist myth. The creators of this myth have contended that this hemisphere of twin continents and islands had remained hidden beyond awesome and forbidding western seas waiting for the bold and intrepid Columbus to find it and to reveal its existence to the Old World. Implicit in these spurious assumptions were other sophisms: that contacts between explorers, sea-rovers, traders and adventurers, and native peoples had of necessity to be based on the assumption that might is always right and that discovery automatically brought in its train enslavement and ethnocide for the indigenous peoples.

Columbus was a genius at navigation. Like Magellan, the greatest sea-rover in a new age of legendary mariners, he relied more on instinct than on instruments and charts. The latter were inaccurate to the point of being laughable. Two thousand years earlier, Egyptian, Libyan-Nubian, Phoenician, Carthaginian and later Chinese and other ancient mariners had used more accurate navigational instruments than Columbus' astrolabe. Van Sertima tells us:

The major inventions in maritime navigation that were to transform European shipping during the Renaissance had been made before Christ and were completely lost to Europe during the Dark Ages. The system of latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates, used as early as 100 BC in China, had not, even as late as the Conquest period, been acquired by Europe, whose navigators could not read longitude until the eighteenth century. The lateen sail hoisted on the Spanish and Portuguese caravels came from the Arabs. The Astrolabe (an instrument to determine latitude by the sun's altitude), although originally invented by the ancient Greeks,

diffused to fifteenth-century Europe after passing through centuries of development by the Arabs.¹³

Columbus had tried his very best to learn all that he could about the possibility of finding a passage to the East Indies by travelling across the western seas. His brother Bartholomew, who had worked in Lisbon for years as a mapmaker, and who was much better educated, had been very helpful; but even so, what they did not know about the lands to the west could have filled whole libraries. Not being able to read Italian and knowing Latin indifferently had not helped either, because the Vatican library, one of the most important in the Mediterranean world, could have provided him with interesting and invaluable information.

Gonzolo Oviedo, the sixteenth-century historian and apologist for Spanish crimes against humanity in the Americas, whom Las Casas had described truthfully as 'a deadly enemy of the Indians',¹⁴ had been quoted extensively by Juan de Sepulveda during the Las Casas/Sepulveda debate at Valladolid in 1550. This debate, sponsored by Emperor Charles V, who sent his son and heir to represent him, focused on the question of the intellectual and religious capacity of the American Indians. Oviedo, who was as notable as a slave-hunter, and defender of the slave-owning class, was described by the Argentine Fernando Miranda as 'a man of the nobility who represented the opinion of the privileged, or of those who aspired to be, and was full of aristocratic prejudices created by birth and education'. While of Las Casas, he had written: 'Las Casas is the most vibrant popular voice who is able to reach court circles by his will, integrity and talent.'¹⁵ But this same Oviedo, a scholar who had access to the Vatican library, had written (and Sepulveda had quoted him): 'The Indies were once under the authority of the Visigothic monarchy of Spain: hence the Castilian kings were merely "recovering" lands that had once been Spanish.'¹⁶

This somewhat far fetched claim, with its garbled conclusion, nevertheless points to the fact that Oviedo must have come across evidence of pre-Columbian links between the Old World and the Americas. Sepulveda had also had access to the Vatican library, and he had, in quoting Oviedo, taken his claims a step further; he stated that since culture-bringers from the Old World to the Americas had 'civilised' native peoples there in pre-Columbian times, and these natives had then reverted to barbarism, this was an adequate justification for treating them as slaves and subhuman beings. Both Oviedo and Sepulveda, therefore, knew about Old and New World pre-Columbian contacts, even though they had described those ancient links in somewhat fanciful and inaccurate terms.

Before becoming Columbus' partner and chief pilot, Martin Olonzo Pinzon had been told by a friend who had done research in the Vatican library that he was certain that there was land to the west, and that

sea-rovers from Africa and from Europe had sailed to and from those lands – ‘Arias Perez Pinzon, the son of Martin Alonso, testified that his father had definite indications concerning the Lands to the West, which indications he had found in documents in the library of Pope Innocent VIII.’¹⁷ That is why Columbus could persuade the senior Pinzon and his brothers, some of the leading navigators of the Mediterranean world (‘members of an extraordinarily able family of merchants, ship owners and pilots’¹⁸), to join his ‘Enterprise of the Indies’ so easily. Martin Olonzo had found Columbus very persuasive when he talked about land to the west. However, it is apparent that he did not entirely trust the Genoese since he only consented to take part in that bold and daring venture after it was agreed that all spoils of the enterprise would be shared on a fifty-fifty basis. Columbus did subsequently renege on that unsigned gentleman’s agreement and, after both parties had died, the Pinzon heirs were forced to bring a lawsuit against the inheritors of the Admiral’s fortune.

The frustrations of not being able to communicate with the Native Americans began to recede by the end of Columbus’ second voyage. Although only a handful of priests bothered to learn the Arawakian and Carib languages, many ‘Indians’ learnt Spanish with an ease that baffled those bigots who wanted to claim that the indigenous peoples were not human. While he was in Espanola for the second time, the ‘Indians’ (and this misnomer had become the name of all the indigenes of an ancient world suddenly branded as ‘New’) told Columbus:

there had come to Espanola a black people who have [sic] the tops of their spears made of a metal which they call gua-nin, of which he (Columbus) had sent Sovereigns to have them assayed, when it was found that of the 32 parts, 18 were of gold, 6 of silver and 8 of copper.¹⁹

These spears and their metal content were identical with those found in Guinea by Portuguese merchant captains, and on the basis of the findings by the royal assayers it was clear that only traders from the Guinea Coast could have brought them to Espanola. Those black traders who were celebrated in Indian legends were one of the groups of significant precursors who had been coming from the Old World to the New for nearly 5,000 years. Barry Fell, in his pioneering study *America BC*, stated that the earliest trans-Atlantic crossings had been accidental ones by Iberians and Libyans. Van Sertima afterwards corrected Fell, pointing out that the ancient Libyans he referred to were, in fact, Libyan-Nubians, that is, predominantly black and brown inhabitants of that country (and Fell agreed and apologised). Even enlightened scholars like Fell (he was born in New Zealand and was brought up in the midst of Maoris) have found it difficult to envisage Negro-Africans as intrepid sea-rovers, traders, settlers and culture-bringers in either the

ancient or the modern world. As a result, whenever incontrovertible evidence of significant African cultural influences in pre-Columbian America has been presented, eurocentric scholars have suddenly developed an intellectual myopia, claiming that they could see shadows but no substance. The truth is that they have been conditioned to see Negro-Africans as slaves, servants, buffoons, gladiators of fortune and figments of a coloniser's imagination for so long that they have become victims of their own racist propaganda. Van Sertima was stating the bald truth when he wrote:

It is hard for many to imagine the Negro-African figure being venerated as a god among the American Indians. He has always been represented as the lowliest of the low, at least since the era of conquest and slavery. His humiliation as a world figure begins, in fact, with the coming of Columbus. It was in the very decade of his 'discoveries' that the black and white Moors were laid low. The image of the Negro-African as a backward, slow and uninventive being is still with us. Not only his manhood and his freedom but even the memory of his cultural and technological achievements before the day of his humiliation seemed to have been erased from the consciousness of history. Even in the thinking of Leo Weiner, M.D.W. Jeffreys and James Bailey, white scholars who have all sought to prove the Negro-African presence in pre-Columbian America, the black man still figures as an inferior.²⁰

To this list of eminent white scholars, one must again add the name of Barry Fell, the brilliant epigrapher who whitewashed the Egyptian, Libyan-Nubian and Carthaginian civilisations, conceiving of them as being in Africa but not of Black Africa. Fell went out of the way to imply that all of the civilisations on the northern Mediterranean littoral were dominated by 'light-skinned' settlers. In his *America BC*, he made the erroneous claim that Ancient Libya, a kingdom on the shores of the Gulf of Sirte, to the west of Egypt, was 'one whose light-skinned inhabitants were drawn from the mixed population of Anatolian sea peoples who invaded Libya in 1250 BC, native Berbers and Spartan Greeks who settled the eastern margin of the Gulf coast. The Greek influence persisted in the American Libyan settlements at least until circa 1100 AD.'²¹

The eurocentric speculation of Fell's is patently false. The Libyan population in 1250 BC was predominantly Negro-African, and the most civilised peoples in that population would have been Nubian-Libyans, Egyptians and Ethiopians who had migrated from the Nile Valley. The peoples that Fell mentions as being the elites were, in fact, peripheral ethnic groups. The all-powerful Egyptian and Nubian rulers of the Nile Valley civilisations would never have allowed 'light-skinned' or, for that matter, any other settlers to establish colonies on the strategic Gulf of

Sirte without their royal approval. And implicit in this approval would have been an agreement by the settlers to accept the protection of the reigning Pharaoh. White scholars, therefore, even liberals and very fine epigraphers like Fell, once they begin delving seriously into the ancient American past, have found themselves caught on the horns of a dilemma. Their eurocentrism has led them into an intellectual vortex out of which they can find no escape. The only way out is to acknowledge that some of the foremost culture-bringers from the Old World to the New in pre-Columbian times were Negro-Africans. The colossal stone heads with their unmistakable negroid features at La Venta, Tres Zapotes, San Lorenzo and other sites in the Olmec heartland stand as a constant reproach to those who have been blinded by racist fantasies and an intellectual myopia for five centuries. There are also thousands of artifacts that art historians, archaeologists and a variety of researchers from other disciplines have been unearthing all over the Americas. The Alexander von Wuthenau museum in Mexico City has become a mecca for a growing body of scholars interested in an ancient pre-Columbian African presence in the Americas. Tiho Narva, the Afro-Carib scholar, after visiting this unique museum for the first time wrote:

How could we have ignored such overwhelming evidence for so long! Racial and religious prejudice can place blinders over the eyes of the most astute observers and then both the ideologues of racial bigotry and its victims become afflicted with the same intellectual myopia – the coloniser and the colonised become tied together with a Gordian knot of perverted untruths. Standing in the midst of that impressive collection, I couldn't help asking myself, how could we, the victims of racism, have ignored so much important evidence of a proud Amerindian and African pre-Columbian past for so long? And I could not help envying von Wuthenau, an Austrian aristocrat, his genius for having stumbled upon such a significant treasure trove, for recognising its value and pushing forward against a tide of disbelief decade after decade. Only recently did a small band of Black scholars emerge to acknowledge the importance of von Wuthenau's work. With his unique collection surrounding me, I had an eerie feeling that veils obscuring the past had been torn asunder and a whole magical universe resurrected for us: the sacred and secular masks, the finely wrought terra cottas, the ceramic marvels, the sculpted pieces from miniature to lifesized, the ceremonial pipes and artifacts and the realistically carved camels and elephants (animals that did not exist in the Americas). Viewing all of this, I told myself repeatedly that the creators of those marvellously evocative works were my ancestors, and somehow, upon leaving that museum I suddenly felt that I could walk taller for the rest of my days.²²

The question of why eurocentric scholars have chosen to ignore not only African but all of the other pre-Columbian voyagers and culture-bringers from the Old World to the Americas, and why they have continued to cling to their neo-creationist myth can only be answered by pointing out that both in life and in scholarship there are none so blind as those who will not see. This neo-creationist theology of history has made it easier to sustain racist fantasies about 'superior' Europeans and Euro-Americans and 'inferior' Indians and Africans. In addition, this easy credo of an America 'born again' in 1492, when Columbus sailed the ocean blue, absolves one from probing into America's historical roots in a distant past.

The effect of this theory has been seen in the analysis of early Native American languages which have been classed together as the supposed indigenous products of the New World. The massive Phoenician, Libyan and other Old World elements to be found in their vocabularies have gone unrecognised. Scripts that have been deciphered and well documented in Europe have, when discovered in the Americas, been dismissed as 'marks made by ploughshares or the actions of roots of trees'.²³ The scholars who made these claims have yet to explain how ploughs and roots could make marks in Egyptian, Libyan, Punic, Iberian, Ogam and other languages!

But Fell's list of 'Representative dates and events in Ancient and Medieval History', based on coins, inscriptions and tree-ring analyses, has made an important contribution to pre-Columbian studies. Beginning with visits by Carthaginian traders in 325 BC, he then takes us up to 1524 when Verrazano found blond natives in Rhode Island. He also lists the first Norse visits to north-east America in 1000 AD, the Vinland incursions in 1341 AD, and the 1355-62 Norwegian expedition that had set out to find lost Vinland Norse settlers. His unique chronicle of dates and events spells out that in 1398 the last Norse-Celtic voyage to North America took place. But since Fell's vision of the ancient world was one that focused exclusively on 'light-skinned' peoples being the dominant figures in all Old and New World civilisations, it is no wonder that he omitted mention of trans-Atlantic journeys by Negro-Africans in his long and detailed list of representative dates. Van Sertima, in *They Came Before Columbus*, made up for Fell's omissions. After decades of research, he presented us with irrefutable evidence that Negro-Africans had travelled to the coast and hinterland of southern Mexico around 700 BC. They had done so, he states, during the reign of Ta-har-ka (or Tir-ha-kah) the Black Pharaoh of the twenty-fifth dynasty. The Negro-African pharaohs, who were among the greatest rulers of the ancient world, hailed from Nubia and Ethiopia in the upper regions of the Nile, an organic part of the Negro-African heartland. Eurocentric scholars have been trying to ignore or, by using convoluted and spurious arguments, to evade facing up to this fact for centuries. But modern

archaeologists, who can apply scientific techniques that were unheard of four or five decades ago to their studies, are now 'discovering' to their dismay that the cradle of Egyptian civilisation was in the upper Nile's Black heartland and not in the delta, as they had been claiming so stridently for so long. Centuries before, of course, Herodotus (here quoted by Cesaire) had declared:

That the Egyptians were originally only a colony of the Ethiopians, and Diodorus Siculus having repeated the same thing and aggravated his offence by portraying the Ethiopians in such a way that no mistake was possible ('*Plerique omnes*', to quote the Latin translation, '*nigro sunt colore, facie sima, crispis capillis*', Book III, Section 8), it was of the greatest importance to mount a counterattack. That being granted, and almost all the western scholars having deliberately set out to tear Egypt away from Africa, even at the risk of no longer being able to explain it.²⁴

When W.E.B. DuBois in his *The World and Africa* had written about this half a century ago, he had been ridiculed and ignored by eurocentric scholars. The late Cheikh Anta Diop, a brilliant successor to DuBois, who was a physicist and Egyptologist, nevertheless proved DuBois correct during the course of a lifetime of solid scientific research and voluminous writing. Baudelaire, the modern French poet, had once said that the cleverest trick the devil ever played was to pretend that he didn't exist. Eurocentric scholars, unable to refute Diop's scientific data, have continued to play the game of Baudelaire's devil – pretending that neither the author nor his works ever existed. *The Journal of African Civilisations*, which Van Sertima founded and continues to edit, has consistently presented readers with a formidable array of evidence and has proved that numerous 'discoverers' of the Americas had preceded Columbus by millenia. The most important of these were African, including Egyptians, Libyan-Nubians, Carthaginians and, much later, Afro-Arab traders and Malians. Fell, focusing his research on non-African 'discoverers', has chosen to concentrate on pre-Columbian voyages made, and settlements established by, Celts, Greeks, Iberians, Norsemen and Han Chinese, ignoring the massive evidence of ancient African cultural infusions. The Olmec heartland, which Van Sertima highlighted after a lifetime of careful and meticulous research, fills one with wonder when one first stumbles upon it. He identifies the massive Negro-African heads sculpted in stone as honouring god-kings, warrior-dynasts, healers, traders and revered culture-bringers. The realism with which these colossi are sculpted makes them seem startlingly alive today, three millenia after they were completed. Although only a fraction of the total number of monuments from that ancient American past have been excavated so far, those brooding African stone heads lie scattered across a vast

landscape like pendants from a cosmic necklace.

As a further testament to that ancient African cultural presence in the Americas, there are important Black gods permanently enshrined in the Amerindian pantheon – Ixtlilton, ‘The One With the Black Face’, a medicine god of the Mexicans; and for both Mexicans and Mayans there was Ekchuah, the Black god of travelling merchants. The clues about the profound cultural linkages between Africans and Amerindians begin to multiply when we examine comparative structures in the languages of the two peoples, the similarities in their mythology where their mytho-poetic dreams have fused, and their ontological systems where intricate patterns have been forged upon a common New World cultural matrix. Their material cultures, too, have in common the practice of mound-building, agricultural technologies, pyramids and astronomical sites. It has also been proven by botanists that strains of African cotton were introduced into the Americas as early as 5,000 years ago. Van Sertima makes a very good case indeed when he presents us with an array of facts and eminently logical deductions to substantiate his claims. After his thorough and meticulous investigations, he concluded that the African sea-rovers, traders and settlers who first came to Merida and then went into the Olmec hinterland, had, in fact, voyaged with Phoenicians, when those famed mariners of the Middle East were vassals of Taharka, the Black Pharaoh of the twenty-fifth dynasty. Van Sertima has not only brought formidable scholarly evidence to support his theories about the ancient African presence in Middle America, he has also dealt with later pre-Columbian voyages and, in particular, the expedition led by the Malian Emperor, Abubakari the Second. In 1311 this renowned ruler had sailed for the Americas with 400 ships and never returned. And it is now considered very likely that the fierce, warlike ‘Ethiopians’, whom the Indians around Darien had described for Balboa (and two of whom he had actually seen after they had been taken prisoner by his Indian hosts), could very well have been descendants of the Malians who had crossed the Atlantic as members of the Abubakari expedition. Peter Martyr, the first historian of America, wrote: ‘The Spaniards found Negroes in this province. They only live one day’s march from Quarequa and they are fierce ... It is thought that Negro pirates from Ethiopia established themselves after the wreck of their ships in these mountains.’²⁵ Another encounter was described by Fray Gregoria Garcia, a priest of the Dominican order who spent nine years in Peru. In a book that had been silenced by the Spanish Inquisition, he wrote: ‘Here were found slaves of the lord – Negroes – who were the first our people saw in the Indies.’²⁶

Van Sertima’s *They Came Before Columbus* and Fell’s *America BC* were by sheer coincidence published around the same time and reviewed in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review* by Professor Glyn Daniel,

a Cambridge University don. The learned Cambridge don was at least democratic in this respect: he heaped equal amounts of contumely upon both authors' heads, treating those two trail-blazing and very important books in a cavalier fashion. But a decade has passed since that disgraceful review was published and the two books are still in great demand.

The late Samuel Morison and scholars of his ilk, who were researching the early Columbian era, seem to have had a vested interest in perpetuating the neo-creationist myth that Columbus, having sailed the ocean blue, 'discovered' America in 1492. Wittingly or unwittingly, they have supported the Daniel penchant for dismissing out of hand any suggestion that there were any links at all between the Old World and the Americas in pre-Columbian times. But with more and more evidence being brought to the fore by Van Sertima, von Wuthenau and other eminent scholars, the claims of those 'doubting Thomases' are beginning to sound increasingly strident and hollow.

* * *

Columbus, in his most troubled moments, must frequently have sensed that he was balanced in an uneasy equipoise between the superstitious dread of the unknown that was a heritage of the Middle Ages and the new ideas of the Renaissance. The former was stultifying whilst the latter brought with it an ineluctable sense of freedom from an intellectual miasma. Lewis Hanke, in his study *All Mankind is One*, stated: 'The period of the Renaissance and the Reformation, in which Las Casas (and Columbus) lived, has usually been considered an age in which the horizons of men were widened.' And then he quotes Myres, who had written in 1910: 'New vistas of the world were being opened by the voyagers, new types of men, of modes of life, of societies and states, were being discovered and described . . . and new questions, which were nevertheless as old as the hills, made eddies and rapids in the swift current of thought, and cried out for an answer.'²⁷

Myres was another uncritical psalm-singer for the Renaissance. For centuries, we have been fed on an intellectual diet of the glories of that period, whilst its crimes, its monstrous medieval cruelties, its racism and the genocidal holocausts it unleashed have been ignored. If we had paid more attention to the dark underside of the Renaissance, then perhaps Hitler would never have arisen. For some, the Renaissance was the best of times, while for others, it was the worst of times. Columbus was an archetypal figure in that age, and in retrospect we can now see that he epitomised all of its strengths and weaknesses, its magnificent humanistic declarations, on the one hand, and its unbridled greed and inhumanity, on the other. After a relatively short and tumultuous lifetime, that Genoese of humble birth, who had risen to a pinnacle of

fame, passed away, impoverished, dishonoured and cast aside by the Spanish sovereigns he had served so well. If there was some duplicity in his dealings with them, one can point out that Ferdinand, who trusted no one and who was for ever reneging on his promises when it suited him (immediately after Columbus' first voyage, Ferdinand literally tore up the Protocol of Capitulation he had signed so solemnly with the Admiral), far outstripped Columbus in low cunning and Machiavellian guile. Duff said of him:

He was a cold-blooded man, whose character was written on an impassive countenance. He was always calm and calculating and he estimated men by their possible value to him; his friendships were based upon purely material considerations. When a friend was no longer useful he would be cast aside ... with the same detachment that he would cast away a worn out coat ... Isabella ... was ... his direct counterpart. She was in every sense a woman of great magnanimity and without a trace of meanness of spirit ... She could not tolerate perfidy and Machiavellism ... ²⁸

This grim character sketch leaves one wondering how Isabella could have tolerated her husband for even a day, since Ferdinand would have represented all the qualities she abhorred. Duff did not attempt to resolve this contradiction, therefore one can only conclude that the compulsion to share power can bring saints and sinners together on the nuptial bed in a mysterious way. Columbus, in spite of his single-minded zeal, had a certain naivety about him. He died without ever once realising the extent to which he, a dreamer, a visionary and a gambler in the Kingdom of Chance, had, with the success of his 'Enterprise of the Indies', provided a new and enduring opportunity for resurrecting the buried pre-Columbian links between Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. During his relatively short lifetime, he had been too preoccupied with the business of inventing a reality about his origins, his life, his accomplishments, the new lands upon which he stumbled and the strange and exotic peoples he had encountered, to worry about issues of truth and honesty. In dealing with Columbus and the European rediscovery of America, one is forced to paraphrase Santayana and to declare that those who ignore the past will of necessity be forced to invent a past, present and future for themselves. Columbus succeeded in doing just this, admirably. Once the past had been erased, the present and the future of the Americas fitted easily into the neo-creationist myth with which we have been encumbered for five centuries. Racism took root and has flourished at the heart of that myth.

At the beginning of the Columbian era, two important historical events conspired to provide fertile soil in which the seeds of racism could germinate and sprout. The first was the fall of Granada on 2 January 1492 and the second was the burning of thousands of priceless

manuscripts by the Spanish conquerors of the Moors immediately after that final victory. The fall of Granada marked the end of 700 years of African power and influence in Europe, which, at its zenith, extended from the Atlantic coast of Portugal to the Rhone Valley of France. Evidence of Africa's civilising mission in Europe has been left strewn all over the Iberian Peninsula, but this evidence is now being presented to us with new and whitewashed labels. The Moors, we are told repeatedly by eurocentric scholars, were not African. True enough, these scholars assure us, the majority of Moors had lived on the African continent for countless millennia, but they were, nonetheless, a 'race' of hybrid 'semites'. Using the same perverted logic, one could declare with equal justification that the Italians are not descendants of the Romans, nor the Scandinavians descendants of the Vikings. Racism begins with the need of one people to exploit another and the development of an ideology to justify this exploitation. And, when logic and truth stand in the way of even the most spurious racist dogma, they are simply brushed aside.

Columbus invariably interspersed his racist and mendacious declarations with pious avowals in the name of the Holy Church. On Friday, 13 October 1492, his second day in the Americas, he had written in his *Journal*, with the absolute confidence of one who knows not and knows not that he knows not, that the Lucayos '... came down to the shore, shouting to us and giving thanks to God ... others cried with loud voices both men and women "come and see the men who have come from heaven. Bring them food and drink."' ²⁹ On the basis of this inspired piece of fiction, one is asked to believe that in a single day Columbus had mastered the complex Arawakian tongue, or that the Lucayos had mastered the intricacies of the Spanish language and religion.

If, as Columbus had claimed on 13 October, a host of native peoples gathered to welcome him were giving praise to an Almighty whom Spaniard and Indian alike both worshipped, it becomes all the more remarkable that two weeks later, on 1 November, he could write in his *Journal* that 'The Indians ... had no religion (like the others found earlier)'. ³⁰ These 'others' were the Lucayos of Guanahani with whom he had established an extraordinarily tenuous linguistic link earlier, during the few days he had spent with them. This did not stop Columbus from compounding one fatuous claim with another.

For five centuries we have been conditioned to see the Native Americans who discovered Columbus on their beaches through his eyes and never to see him through theirs. These distorted images have become fixed as the Northern Star in a constellation of millions of minds (and this applies equally to those of the coloniser and the colonised).

There are those who proffer the excuse that Columbus was merely a

creature of his age with half of his mind anchored in the Middle Ages and the other half wrestling with the new ideas of the Renaissance, and that, in fact, he was far more enlightened than most of his peers. This might very well be true, but his peers did not initiate the Atlantic slave trade, he, Columbus, did; his peers did not set in motion the ethnocide that left over forty islands in the Caribbean completely depopulated in less than four decades, he did; nor did any of his peers claim that they were the architects of an institutionalised racism that began to take shape the first day he landed on Guanahani.

Less than a year before his fateful first voyage, Columbus had been an annoyingly persistent and penniless petitioner, a Genoese nobody trying to sell what many people thought was a questionable scheme, grandiloquently described by him as the 'Enterprise of the Indies' to the shrewd sovereigns of Castille. King John of Portugal (much to his subsequent regret), on the advice of his learned counsellors, had turned down the proposal and sent the disillusioned Columbus packing. Genoese were not liked in either Spain or Portugal. They were considered to be too pushy and ambitious. Columbus had only entered the ranks of the Spanish nobility on the morning he set foot on the beach at Guanahani. The terms of his contract drawn up with Ferdinand and Isabella had spelled out quite clearly that if he did not find land to the west, he would simply return to the anonymity that was waiting for him. But that accomplished sailor of fortune, Cristobal Colon, had won out in the face of a thousand and one things that might have gone wrong before and after his three caravels had crossed the bar at Saltes on 2 August 1492. Columbus was very much the lower middle-class parvenu assuming aristocratic airs and deliberately distancing himself from those who were constant and irritating reminders of his own humble origins. He was, in fact, a scion of the Genoese working class (he came from a family of wool carders). As such, he was closer to both the ordinary sailors serving under him and the Native Americans who had the misfortune to fall prey to his empire-building fantasies. But he would not have acknowledged this on pain of death. Those Spanish aristocrats whose ranks he aspired to join, however, never forgave him the glory he had won, on the one hand, and his lowly origins, on the other. In his account to the Spanish Sovereigns about his first voyage, Columbus could not help taking a dig at his aristocratic enemies at court when he declared that the Lord had guided him to the lands he had discovered and that:

Of this voyage, it has been wonderfully shown to be so, as may be seen from this account and the many notable miracles performed throughout, as well as the fortune which has attended myself who remained so long a time at the court of Your Highnesses with the opposition and contrary opinion of so many of the principal members

of your household, who were all against me and regarded my project as a joke ...³¹

His enemies continued to intrigue relentlessly against him at court, from the moment he had returned in triumph from that first voyage, right up to the time of his death.

The original vignettes from Columbus' *Journal*, which Las Casas, in his zeal to edit that prolix document, spared for our scrutiny, are very revealing. Reading them, we come closer to understanding Columbus, the man, a parvenu from Genoa seeking fame and fortune in the courts of fifteenth-century European kings and queens. The other Columbus, the mythical discoverer of a New World, is never as real as the one we catch glimpses of when we read his own, unedited writings. These give us insights into the Admiral's penchant for sycophancy and his shrewd understanding of the psychology of his royal sponsors. In order to catch Queen Isabella's attention and to win her sympathy, he wrote:

They (the Native Americans) are a very loving race and without covetousness and suitable to any use and I declare to your Highnesses that there is not a better country nor a better people in the world. They love their neighbours as they do themselves and their speech is the softest in the world being always accompanied by smiles.³²

Isabella, it was said, slept with a portrait of Christ clutched to her bosom, while her husband, Ferdinand, slept with a copy of Bernardo Machiavelli's *The Prince* under his pillow. For Ferdinand's benefit, on 22 December the Admiral added: 'Our Lord in his piety, guide me that I may find the gold, I mean their mine, as I have many here who profess to know it.' This declaration with its cunningly disguised racism and lust for gold was most definitely meant for Ferdinand's eyes, because, as far as that ruthlessly pragmatic royal sponsor was concerned, tales about distant lands inhabited by angelic souls made good reading for pious evangelists, but Columbus understood him well enough to know that he would have brushed aside the pious sentiments and asked bluntly, 'What about gold and spices? After all, that is what we sent you there to discover and to bring back, and to fill our depleted royal coffers to overflowing.'

Columbus, newly elevated to the ranks of the Spanish aristocracy, having overnight become a Viceroy and an Admiral of the Ocean Sea, had barely settled down to enjoy his new and heady roles when he spelled out his colonial policy with its profoundly racist and genocidal undertones. In a letter to Luis de Santagel, the influential Jewish businessman who had backed his 'Enterprise of the Indies' from the beginning, he had stated: 'On my arrival in the Indies, I took by force in the first island I found, some of these natives that they might learn our language and give me information about what there was in those

parts.³³

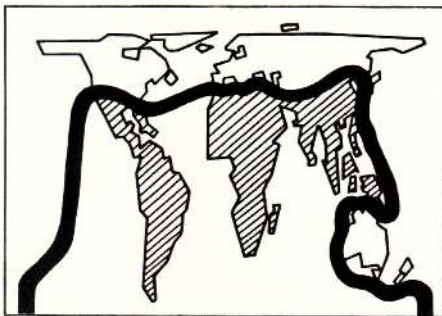
Thus, a psychological mutation which began when Columbus left Genoa as a callow, illiterate and ambitious youth, ended its inexorable cycle of change in the Antilles where he finally fulfilled his life-long dream of finding land to the west. The erstwhile wool carder's son was transformed into an instant Prospero, and with every new horizon he crossed, he began to see visions of Calibans waiting to be enslaved and exploited. As Cassius had said of Caesar: 'When he doth attain the highest rung, he then unto the ladder turns his back scorning the base degrees by which he did ascend.'

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CAROL B. THOMPSON

War by another name: destabilisation in Nicaragua and Mozambique

Isabella Nuñez is back to work at the health clinic. Six months ago she was kidnapped by the US-backed contras in Nicaragua and taken to Honduras where she was forced to work as a secretary for a contra leader; he repeatedly raped her. She was lucky to have escaped, for six of the ten other health workers were killed. Now she is training new health workers to help the Sandinista government provide services to the people.

Isabel Johane is also back at work in her village in Mozambique, but she is missing an ear and her brother is dead. The South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) had entered their village and randomly killed several, abducting others. Isabel was taken to a neighbouring camp, but when Frelimo liberated the area from the MNR, she returned to work in a clinic that has no medicine, no furniture, and the building itself has been damaged.

In the policy of destabilisation, promoted by the US in Nicaragua and by South Africa in Mozambique, trained leaders such as health workers, agricultural extension workers and teachers are prime targets for the counter-revolutionaries. The major goal of destabilisation is to undermine the social transformations which are taking place, such as promoting preventive health care in rural areas that have never known health services. Newly trained young people represent a new way of life, the new hope, and they are the first prey.

Since 1981 destabilisation has been a major foreign policy option of

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the Reagan Administration and of the Botha regime. By comparing the two approaches to destabilisation within two different regions, this study clarifies the strategy and goals of the policy and analyses foreign policy formulation of the two regional powers.

Because the concept of destabilisation is comprehensive, a clear definition is necessary for the analysis. It refers to all kinds of efforts on the part of a powerful actor, *short of open invasion*, to weaken and eliminate another actor that for ideological, strategic, economic and political reasons is unacceptable, even if *not* constituting a direct security threat.¹ Not a Vietnam approach, which involves full-scale bombing and warfare, destabilisation seeks to destroy the government from within, to render a country ungovernable. It is implosion. To appear legitimate, sabotage is done by nationals of the target country or from neighbouring countries, not by the army of the destabiliser.

Although both governments use the tactic throughout their regions, and this regional context will be discussed, the focus of this study is Nicaragua and Mozambique. For it is in Nicaragua and Mozambique that the full range of destabilisation tactics is employed, as an *alternative* to full-scale military invasion.

Nicaragua is not Mozambique, and the US is not South Africa. The comparison will underline these differences, but also show both the strategic and tactical similarities of the destabilisation policies. The choice of the policy and the similarities do reveal collaboration between the US and South Africa. The US has supported South African apartheid economically and politically; it rarely protests against South African attacks on its neighbours, instead, often blaming the latter for provoking the attacks. South Africa is not an American puppet, but tacit approval and material support encourage apartheid aggression: the climate of bellicosity and interventionism diffused by Washington has encouraged other, junior, allies to seize their opportunities.²

Destabilisation as a policy choice

The drive behind the policy of destabilisation can only partially be explained by classical theories of imperialism. Certainly, with the falling rate of profit at home, outside markets and investments are sought. However, with economic crisis at home, international dominance is weakened and control limited. The economy may need regional profitability and market outlets, but the government cannot afford to invade in order to bring the economic structures under more direct control. For South Africa, its repeated invasions of Angola and its war in Namibia make the cost of another invasion in Mozambique prohibitive and impractical; putting an army on two extreme borders is risky (and by 1985 the army was also needed in the townships). The US is spending

unprecedented funds on conventional warfare and could 'afford' an invasion of Nicaragua, but two factors so far have deterred that. One is the lesson from Vietnam: it is easy to invade a country; it is not so easy to leave. The mobilisation of Nicaraguans guarantees a lengthy conflict if US troops go in. Further, mass organising in the US has rendered the political cost of an invasion too high. Americans do not support such a manoeuvre³ and are aware of the situation in Nicaragua (in contrast to Grenada, where most Americans were ignorant of its location, let alone the issues, when they awoke to the morning news of a 'successful' invasion). Destabilisation is chosen as a tactic, therefore, when the dominant country judges it cannot invade another, but it also cannot coexist.

One reason given for declaring the new governments 'unacceptable' is the accusation that they are 'exporting revolution' to their neighbours. Although the US has repeatedly accused Nicaragua of supplying arms to the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, there has been no evidence. On 13 January 1981, a week before Reagan took office, the US embassy in El Salvador stated that 100 Nicaraguan commandos had landed; the US ambassador to Nicaragua later admitted the landing was 'fictional'.⁴ In February 1981 a white paper was released to 'prove' arms were arriving in El Salvador from Nicaragua; several independent investigations established that most of the documents were forgeries. By 1984 even a CIA analyst said there were no verified reports of arms traffic and no interdictions since April 1981.⁵ Before 1984 Mozambique allowed the African National Congress (ANC) to traverse Mozambican territory on the way to South Africa; they have never allowed ANC bases. After the Nkomati Accord in 1984 ANC activities were strictly curtailed, but South African destabilisation continued. It became clear to both Nicaragua and Mozambique that their support of liberation forces in neighbouring countries was only an initial reason for the destabilisation; the real target was their own governments, their own experiments in social transformation.

The main goal of destabilisation is to destroy any attempts by the new government to take control of the domestic economy. To maintain the market and production relations under old patterns of dominance, the regional power has to show the nationals that the new system cannot work. Social and economic transformations are threatening examples to other states in the region, such as the precarious governments of El Salvador, Honduras or Guatemala, as well as apartheid Namibia or South Africa.

In both Nicaragua and Mozambique the governments took over only *abandoned* land and factories, deserted after the Somocistas and Portuguese fled in panic during the final stages of the struggles. Anastasio Somoza Debayle himself owned over 25 per cent of the land, which was redistributed by the Sandinistas to collectives and to private small

farmers. Mozambique set up state farms on abandoned estates, yet was so hesitant to nationalise functioning enterprises that the Sena Sugar Estates allowed cane to rot in the fields, the refinery to cease working and ran up a debt of \$45m (equivalent to 15 per cent of the state budget) with the Bank of Mozambique before the government took over.⁶ Both governments did make it clear that the workers would now receive the fruits of their labour as workers organised in the factories and on communal plots to make management decisions. Debate and criticism of work conditions were encouraged.

A major difference between Nicaragua and Mozambique is that Frelimo moved to nationalise the major sectors of the economy (banking, insurance, legal and health services, housing, and even pharmacies and funeral parlours), while the Sandinistas were explicitly restrained in nationalisation, with 66 per cent of agriculture and 75 per cent of industry remaining in private hands, although the state does control banking and trade.⁷ Both Nicaragua and Mozambique have set up 'fair price' stores and cooperatives to assist in a more equitable distribution of basic necessities. The Sandinistas have repeatedly made it clear that they desire a mixed economy, to take advantage of the technology and expertise of the private sector. They are trying to avoid the mistake of over-nationalisation which Frelimo has now acknowledged.

The impetus for this government intervention in the economy emerges from the necessity to transform the economic legacy of the toppled regime. Exploitation by the Somoza family was so extensive (owning land, banks, ports, shipping firms, airlines and newspapers) that even a blood bank, making a profit off peasants' donated blood, was owned by the family. The revolution was to change these economic structures, not simply replace the Somocistas with other exploiters.

Frelimo came to power after ten years of war (1964-75). The fleeing Portuguese destroyed machinery, ripped out telephone wires, ruined tractors and trucks and generally sabotaged many of the factories. Independence did not mean the end of war, for Frelimo was already assisting the Zimbabwe National African Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in its struggle against the Ian Smith regime of Rhodesia. The Rhodesians (with South African assistance), therefore, bombed Mozambican infrastructures – bridges, roads and irrigation systems. Mozambique also closed its border to Rhodesia, honouring the United Nations' call for sanctions. As in Nicaragua, government intervention in the economy was directed to rationalising production to serve the needs of the majority.

A priority for both governments was to provide their citizens with services to improve the quality of life – and the successes were impressive, until destabilisation escalated. At independence in 1975 only 7 per cent of the Mozambican population had health services; by 1982 the number of health posts almost tripled, to provide some health services

to 40 per cent.⁸ As in Nicaragua, there was a very successful inoculation campaign, covering almost the entire population of children. Only 7 per cent were literate after 400 years of Portuguese colonialism; ten years later, 30 per cent are literate.⁹ In Nicaragua tripling health facilities in rural areas helped reduce infant mortality from 121 per 1,000 in 1978 to 80 per 1,000 in 1983. Nurses and medical students in training have increased 600 and 1,000 per cent, respectively, since 1979.¹⁰ During the intensive campaign in 1980, called the 'second insurrection', literacy increased from 50 to 88 per cent, making it the third most literate Latin American country after Cuba and Argentina.¹¹ The United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America reported that economic growth from 1979-83 increased by 7.67 per cent in real GDP per capita, while for Central America there was a decline of -14.71 per cent GDP per capita and for all of Latin America -9.16 per cent.¹²

Because both states intervened in their economies, often putting peasants and workers in charge of production, the US and South Africa labelled them 'communists' and Soviet puppets. The US government has conveniently ignored the fact that the Soviets were not crucial supporters in the Sandinista bid for power; further, the nationalist analysis of Augusto Cesar Sandino, the Nicaraguan hero who fought US imperialism in the 1930s, had more influence than any marxist-leninist doctrine.¹³ Relations with the Soviets were not established until the end of 1979, months after the Sandinista victory. By 1983 Nicaragua's trade grew in both absolute and percentage terms with CMEA (Council on Mutual Economic Assistance), but only after the US cancellation of sugar quotas and the halt in Mexican oil deliveries. The USSR began supplying Nicaragua with oil, providing as much as 60 per cent in the first quarter of 1984.¹⁴ As the US blocked international loans and credits, the CMEA increased its share.¹⁵ By 1987, however, the Soviets announced a decrease in both credit and oil shipments.¹⁶

The Soviets (and the PRC, the World Council of Churches, the Scandinavians, etc.) did assist Frelimo in defeating Portuguese colonialism. There is a Treaty of Friendship (1977) between Mozambique and the Soviets, and Soviet technicians are helping in mining, fishing, medicine and transport. However, the Soviets were denied a base in Mozambique, for it is in the Mozambican constitution that no foreign power will be allowed a military base. Development assistance from the West and from the PRC is more important than from the Soviets.¹⁷ Finally, Mozambique has been openly critical of some Soviet policies, such as the invasion of Afghanistan. The Reagan Administration and South Africa, however, have reinterpreted the non-aligned policies of Mozambique and Nicaragua to claim that they are Soviet puppets. To warrant military, economic and political destabilisation, the regional conflict must take on an East-West rationale.

Neither one is East-West, however, but really a North-South conflict.

Economies in the South are becoming increasingly important to the US economy. For example, the US exports more to Mexico than to Britain,¹⁸ and markets among the burgeoning populations of the South are important to the revival of US capital. US imports of oil from the Caribbean have risen from 17 to 45 per cent of total oil imports since 1978, and rich deposits of several scarce strategic minerals have been discovered in Central America.¹⁹ Cheap manufactures from developing countries have helped to keep inflation down in the industrialised countries. Finally, US hegemony demands that economies remain open to investment, maximising private production with 'free' competition and 'free' trade.

South Africa, in turn, has had its sphere of influence narrowed as the Portuguese, who were willingly subservient to South African economic dominance, lost their colonies in Mozambique and Angola. And, when South Africa's preferred candidate for the new state of Zimbabwe – Bishop Muzorewa – was soundly defeated by Robert Mugabe, it turned instead to financing and reorganising the MNR, originally set up by the Ian Smith government of Rhodesia. In a vain attempt to sustain South African hegemony, MNR bases were moved from Rhodesia to South Africa to continue their forays into Mozambique.

South Africa, as a developed economy located in the South, also relies on a secure source of cheap labour for production. Mozambicans migrating to the South African mines provided one-fourth to one-third of the labour in the gold mines until the 1970s.²⁰ According to South African economists, increased industrial trade in the region is crucial to economic growth, for many of its exports are not competitive in the wider international market; estimated trade with the region is \$2 billion. Further, it would like to remain the major outlet to the sea for six landlocked countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia, and for the rich Katanga province of Zaire). But Mozambique is developing three important ports (Maputo, Beira, Nacala), which could cut South African transport revenues in half.

For both the US and South Africa it is unacceptable to have a truly non-aligned economy in their backyard. Nicaragua could set the pace in Central America and in the Caribbean for guaranteeing decent wages, promoting food crop before cash crop production and requiring international capital to reinvest, limit transfer pricing, etc.

Although the economic factor is basic, it should not be overstated, however, for Central America represents only 1 per cent of US capital investment overseas. To the Reagan Administration, maintaining ideological hegemony is equally or even more important. Though not a threat to the national security of the US, Nicaragua is a serious threat to the ideological hegemony of the US in the hemisphere. Therefore, its lessons, its example must be 'neutralised'.

And for South Africa, if the example of Mozambique is repeated by

other neighbours, its economy, as presently constituted, could not continue. The obvious difference between the US and South Africa is that the apartheid economy is, in fact, disintegrating from the internal revolt of the people. In its last hour, the apartheid economy finds the dependence of Mozambique even more crucial and its ideological example intolerable.

In addition to the vehement rhetoric of the East-West conflict and the reality of the North-South conflict, there is a third dimension: the 'West-West' conflict. In the recession in the 1980s the US has alleviated its own economic problems of stagflation and unemployment by exporting the crisis overseas. As Harvard economist David Calleo concluded, 'lack of resources to meet all domestic and foreign *ambitions* led to an exploitation of the international economic system . . . Manipulating the system became the substitute for painful adjustment at home.'²¹ High interest rates in the US have attracted capital away from Europe to the US, making adjustments more difficult in Europe. Further, high US deficit spending meant that it did not follow the fiscal constraints required of smaller economies. At the advanced capitalist summits, discussions have generally reached an impasse as the US demands freer trade and its allies demand domestic US adjustments.

In the economic crisis of the 1980s the West is not a monolithic block, but a multi-polarity of interests which can be played one against the other. Competition among the advanced capitalist countries for markets has also increased. Canada immediately took on the Nicaraguan trade office after Reagan's trade embargo closed it in Miami. Nicaragua has easily found alternative markets for its goods in both western and eastern Europe – in 1985 Great Britain and West Germany bought 11 per cent of Nicaragua's total exports.²²

Politically, the social democracies and parties in the Socialist International have also been important critics of destabilisation. The Scandinavian countries have aided Mozambique far more than the 'West' or the 'East'. Several European socialist parties and the Socialist International have established formal links with the Sandinistas. And the struggle is not simply between countries, but also within different countries. The Sandinistas have been quicker and more adept at realising this than Frelimo. They have invited a flow of *norteamericanos*, from farmers to workers to artists, to see Nicaragua for themselves.

Such divisions both among and within the capitalist states have made the job of destabilisation more difficult. The 'enemy' may be the Sandinistas, but sabotage could kill US citizens who are picking coffee in the Nicaraguan mountains. (After the murder of American engineer Benjamin Linder in Nicaragua, the right-wing response was to try to restrict American travel to Nicaragua.) When the MNR kidnaps German, Italian, Portuguese, or American *cooperantes* (development workers), it is difficult for the right-wing in these countries to explain

away these acts of terrorism. The Sandinistas have long said the American people are the only ones who can prevent the US government from invading Nicaragua. In a parallel sense, Frelimo fully understands that the best weapon against the MNR is revolution inside South Africa.²³

Destabilisation tactics

Propaganda

Destabilisation begins with the propaganda campaign, for it determines the success of the whole policy. Nationals of both the target and perpetrating countries must be convinced of the necessity to reverse policies of the new government. Systemic denigration of the Sandinistas and Frelimo is to convince Americans and South Africans that the governments are the 'enemy', and tagging a government 'communist' goes a long way to achieving that goal. The first offensive, therefore, is literally a war of words.

For Nicaragua, President Reagan has escalated the word game by trying to attach a second label to the Sandinistas – terrorist. In July 1983 they were 'counterfeit revolutionaries', by mid-1984 a 'communist totalitarian state' and then a 'reign of terror'.²⁴ In contrast, contras fighting the Nicaraguan government are 'the moral equivalent of our founding fathers', and by June 1985, 'Their goals are our goals'.²⁵ Frelimo has not yet been accused of terrorism, but rather of supporting the 'terrorists' of the ANC – guilt by association.

The language must relate, however tenuously, to events, so disinformation campaigns are conducted. Examples for Nicaragua are many. The November 1984 Reagan accusation that MIGs were in ships on their way to Managua was sustained for days although it proved totally false. President Daniel Ortega requested a US visa to speak in several cities after he had addressed the fortieth anniversary of the UN in October 1985. The visa was denied so he cancelled the engagements. The day he was to leave for the UN, a visa was granted. When he did not proceed with his cancelled engagements, the press was told that he was afraid to confront the American people.²⁶

For Mozambique the propaganda accusations are equally serious. After bombing a jam factory and a child-care centre outside Maputo, South Africa insisted that an ANC strong-hold had been eliminated. When it did attack ANC offices in Maputo, it insisted that they were a military base.

Propaganda directed inside the target country is well organised and financed. Probably the most successful campaign, because it takes advantage of the mistakes the Sandinistas made, is the accusation that they are repressing the Miskito Indians. While refugees in the US from

El Salvador and Guatemala are sent back to their countries, some to be executed, the Miskitos who went into Honduras are treated by the US government and media as heroic refugees from 'totalitarianism'. The Sandinistas admit they had been insensitive to cultural differences on the Atlantic Coast and had alienated the black and indigenous people of Zelaya by moving them from the rivers to protected villages. More than one faction (Misura/Kisan, Misurasata) of the Nicaraguan Resistance are formed by those alienated from the Sandinistas. However, as community groups discussed drafts of the new Nicaraguan constitution, autonomy laws for the Atlantic Coast were added to protect minority rights and cultures. From 1984 Atlantic Coast peoples have been returning to their homes and now defend their villages against the contras.²⁷

MNR propaganda is not as sophisticated as that directed by the CIA for the contras, probably because they do not have the same amount of resources available to them. Further, Mozambique is a vast and empty country, compared to Nicaragua. Terror against isolated villages is much easier in Mozambique, even with trained people's militias to protect them. The MNR has, therefore, penetrated every province of Mozambique, controlling populations mainly through terror.²⁸ They were also able to take advantage of the natural disaster of three years of drought, blaming Frelimo for the lack of food and supplies to the villages.

The propaganda campaigns in the 1980s have reached new levels of international coordination and of sophistication. Right-wing groups organised to 'roll-back communism' have existed since the 1950s, but they have gained importance with the resurgence of conservative governments in the late 1980s. All of them disseminate their views through the media, but some have become right-wing 'think tanks', providing analysis directly to governments. The Council for Inter-American Studies (CIS) wrote the Santa Fe Report which was the blueprint for Reagan's Central American policy in his first term; four CIS members joined the Administration to carry out the plan.²⁹ The Committee on the Present Danger boasts of fifty members in government service. In Europe, the Hans Siedel Foundation of the Conservative CSU in Bavaria holds strategy sessions on Southern Africa, attended by South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha and UNITA of Angola.³⁰ The Konrad Adenauer Foundation of the ruling CDU party in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) has helped formulate the constitution for the Multi-Party Conference (MPC), the South African puppet government in Namibia, and has contributed funds to the MPC.³¹ The Internationale de la Résistance (Paris) has members who have been in the European Parliament, and those attending its first press conference included Simone Veil, an adamant anti-fascist. The Internationale interprets the actions of the MNR and the Nicaraguan Resistance (as well as

counter-revolutionaries in Angola, Afghanistan and Kampuchea) to European parliamentarians as 'resistance to totalitarianism'. On 21 March 1985 its advertisement in *Le Monde* calling for the US Congress to finance the contras was signed by several prominent politicians, including Malcolm Fraser of Australia (who became co-chair of the 'eminent persons' group to discuss sanctions by the Commonwealth against South Africa).³² These groups, and there are many others, interpret the role of the counter-revolutionaries and give them access to American and European policy-makers.

Tactics of other right-wing organisations are even more comprehensive. Such groups as Reverend Moon's Unification Church, the World Anti-Communist Leagues (WACL), the European Institute for Security Matters and Citizens for America provide everything from media campaigns and conferences to material aid and contacts with corporate executives for the counter-revolutionaries. For example, the WACL, led by retired Major General John K. Singlaub, held a conference in San Diego, California, in September 1984 where the MNR arrived with a shopping list: 500 surface-to-air missiles, small arms for 15,000 troops, AK-47 ammo, bazookas and demolition equipment (as well as 'access to the media and important legislators').³³ Documentation on Reverend Moon's organisation is extensive, and it is fully involved in Central American destabilisation, providing free trips and money for anti-government Nicaraguans such as Steadman Fagoth (Misura) and Edgar Chamorro.³⁴

Another set of organisations is more specialised and only acts as a conduit for money to the counter-revolutionaries from corporations and from the groups mentioned above. The list for Central America is long, including groups that claim only 'humanitarian' aid: Friends of the Americas, Human Development Fund, Americares, Knights of Malta, Refugee Relief International, World Medical Relief (this latter has worked hand-in-glove with the CIA for many years, supplying Hmong mercenaries in Laos and other anti-communist forces).³⁵ The mercenary business is alive and well as *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, known for its recruitment for Angola and Rhodesia, continues to recruit and training camps are operating in Florida, Alabama and California.³⁶ Their funds are from private corporations and such training is strictly against US law, but no Department of Justice or congressional investigations have been initiated. On the contrary, 'material aid' from the private groups hitchhikes down to Central America out of US airbases.³⁷

Mozambique has been able to document how Portuguese businessmen help to finance the MNR. MIRN, composed of Portuguese who lost property in Mozambique as they fled Frelimo's rule, has directly aided the MNR. Mercenaries, who receive \$1,750 per month, are trained in Portugal before flying to South Africa.³⁸ Frelimo also has evidence

of material aid directed through Oman and the Comoros to the MNR.

The organisations which assist counter-revolutionaries with lobbying parliamentarians, media campaigns and analysis from think tanks provide an international network for the counter-revolutionaries which gives them a legitimacy far beyond their own capabilities. By attending international conferences, speaking to government officials, appearing on television, they gain credibility; in fact, because neither the FDN nor the MNR has legitimacy with the local people, the international 'respectability' is crucial to their success.

The reasons for the proliferation of organisations like the above, however, go beyond legal lobbying or international networking. With funds for counter-revolutionaries threatened in the elected parliaments, the organisations represent the 'privatisation of roll-back'. When Congress cuts off funds to the contras, it is not a problem for their continuing operations because the private organisations are willing conduits. Similarly, the South African government can say funding for the MNR continues because of private Portuguese interests not under South African control.

A second important reason for the organisations is that, as 'private' entities, they are not subject to as much public scrutiny as government administrations. In the US the private organisations are used explicitly to avoid the Freedom of Information Act. To cite one example, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), formed in November 1983, was inspired by President Reagan's speech in 1982 to the British parliament calling for new mechanisms to combat 'communism' in developing countries. It is a private, non-profit organisation to 'build democratic institutions abroad' and received \$18 million per year in 1984 and 1985 from USIA. Reagan's foreign policy is represented on the Board, with the chair, Carl Gershman, a former aide to Jeane Kirkpatrick. On the Board are Secretary of Labor William Brock, chair of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Dante Fascell and National Republican Committee Chair Frank Fahrenkopf.³⁹ Yet because NED is 'private', it conducts closed meetings and no minutes are published. It is exempt from the restriction on engaging in the internal affairs of other countries and does not have to disclose documents under the Freedom of Information Act. It carries out the foreign policy of the Right, therefore, without oversight or accountability.

Economic destabilisation

An early phase of destabilisation is economic de-linking, purposefully disrupting long-term relations to hurt the weaker partner. Mozambique sought to maintain economic relations with South Africa even in the midst of the Rhodesian war. Acknowledging one hundred years of economic subordination to South Africa, Frelimo's analysis was that it

could afford to close the border with Rhodesia but never with South Africa. The major source of revenue for Portuguese Mozambique – set up as a service economy to South Africa – was port and rail fees for goods coming from the Transvaal. Further, remittances to Mozambican migrant workers in South Africa were paid to the colonial government in gold, which then paid the miners in escudos; Portugal thus earned valuable foreign exchange. It was South Africa, not Frelimo, that reduced rail traffic through Maputo by 80 per cent from 1975 to 1983 and curtailed the number of Mozambique workers from 118,030 in 1975 to 41,362 in 1977.⁴⁰

From 1977-1979 the US Congress voted against any aid to Mozambique because of its violation of 'human rights'; only food aid was sent after devastating floods. In 1984 over 100,000 Mozambicans starved to death.⁴¹ It was a silent death, for the international community was not aware that several areas of Mozambique suffered hunger as much as in Ethiopia. Without the MNR attacking food caravans and Red Cross trucks as explicit targets, the drought would not have caused the deaths.⁴² Yet there was no international outcry against South Africa. The German Red Cross pulled out of Mozambique because of MNR attacks on its operations, without denouncing the terrorism. During the 1982-4 drought, the US delayed food aid to Mozambique. Only after Mozambique signed the Nkomati Accord (non-aggression pact) did US aid flow into the country. In 1984 the US became the largest emergency food supplier; since then aid has diminished from \$30m for 1986 to a requested \$11.6m for 1988. Choosing a Janus strategy, the US government puts little economic pressure on South Africa to stop financing the MNR and yet provides aid to Mozambique.

The US suspended all loans to Nicaragua, complaining that its debt was too high and its payments were in arrears (although the government and banks seem to have supplied Somoza with all he needed). When Nicaragua approached the Inter-American Development Bank for \$60m, Secretary of State Schultz threatened no new financing from the US for the IADB if the directors granted the loan. It was successfully blocked.⁴³

In October 1982 Standard Fruit, the only banana export company in Nicaragua, terminated a five-year contract it signed only a year before. Exxon refused to transport Mexican oil to Nicaragua. By April 1985 Reagan gave an executive order to impose a trade embargo unilaterally, breaking three treaties with Nicaragua (GATT, OAS, Treaty of Friendship). In 1983 after the US had reduced Nicaragua's sugar quota, the Sandinistas found alternatives in Mexico, Algeria and the USSR; after the embargo, European countries welcomed Nicaraguan products. The major concern was oil, for Mexico, which had been providing it at below market rate, could do so no longer. When President Daniel Ortega went to Moscow in 1985 to negotiate a credit of \$400m for oil

and farm inputs, after the US had cut off capital *and* trade, the American government accused the Sandinistas of being a Soviet puppet.

Military destabilisation

Economic de-linking is part of a two-pronged tactic, the other part of which is direct economic sabotage. Both the MNR and the contras have attacked economic infrastructures, technical personnel and productive sectors. If the economy is not permitted to function, then any transformation of economic structures or transition to socialism cannot take place. One frequently hears from analysts who are sympathetic to Mozambique that Frelimo has failed to transform the economic relations of production. Frelimo fully admits its mistakes – for example, overreliance on the state farms to produce foods for the cities – but the criticism should acknowledge that Frelimo has not had a chance to implement its policies. A few examples are sufficient to outline the extensive damage done by destabilisation policies.

In Mozambique sabotage on the infrastructure ranges from oil storage tanks in the port of Beira to the electricity pylons from the Cabora Bassa dam – from 1982 to 1986, more than \$50m of electrical power lines and substations were destroyed.⁴⁴ This sabotage is especially remarkable because most of the electricity is for South Africa. Built by South African and Portuguese financing, Cabora Bassa was to serve the growing industrial sector of the Transvaal – Mozambique, to date, uses about 5 per cent of the power in Tete province. Because of extensive coal deposits, South Africa subsequently decided it could do without Cabora Bassa; a spokesman from the South African energy authority Eskom said the power ‘would have been nice to have, because hydro-electric power is cheaper than that from coal, but the loss is not a crisis. I won’t say that Cabora Bassa has been written off, but there is not certainty of getting power from it again.’⁴⁵ Therefore, the MNR sabotaged what could have been a foreign exchange earner for Mozambique and, at the same time, appeared to be acting independently of South Africa by attacking one of its electricity sources.

As stated earlier, Mozambique has three ports which serve six landlocked countries. From 1982 to 1986, \$82m worth of rails and bridges have been destroyed.⁴⁶ Since 1982 Zimbabwe troops have been helping to keep the Beira line open. The rail to Maputo was built for the Transvaal, but is also important to Swaziland, Botswana and Zimbabwe. By regularly attacking bridges, the MNR again appears to be attacking South African interests, but the sabotage is more important to force the other three states to use South African ports and to jeopardise crucial foreign exchange earnings for Mozambique.

The CIA tried to sabotage Nicaragua’s port by mining it, but this act of war outraged the US Congress and it had the mines removed. Oil

storage tanks have also been bombed. The contras operating from Costa Rica have tried to isolate Atlantic coast villages by attacking river traffic, the main highway of the region. Further, they target the road from Managua to Rama, trying to cut Nicaragua in half.

Factories and fields have also been under direct fire. Each year since 1982 Nicaragua has been uncertain whether it will be allowed to collect its vital coffee harvest because of contra attacks. Thousands of people are mobilised not only to pick coffee but to protect the pickers. In 1984 20,000 youth ready to go to the fields had to remain in Managua as militia because of threats of an American invasion. Coffee-processing plants and grain storage facilities have also been bombed. In Mozambique the list of assaults range from mines in the north (where foreign technicians as well as Mozambicans were killed) to metal works, milling factories, a match factory and an ammo dump in Maputo. Angonia, in the north-east province of Tete, used to be the breadbasket for all of Mozambique; in 1985 thousands fled the region into Zambia and Zimbabwe, not because of the drought (which was over), but because of the MNR. Tete city, the closest urban area to Angonia, had to receive air-lifts of food from the south to avoid mass starvation.⁴⁷ In June 1986 the Sena Sugar Estates' crops and refineries were levelled, and 20,000 head of breed cattle slaughtered.

Given the legacies of underdevelopment and war ('popular uprising' in Nicaragua) for both countries, the cost of destabilisation is very high. Nicaragua reports 250,000 persons displaced from their homes, or 8.3 per cent of the population; Mozambique has 4.5m persons displaced, or 33.1 per cent of its population.⁴⁸

A UNICEF report states that Mozambique (along with Angola) has the highest death rate among children under 5 years old in the world, and the report gives the cause: war waged by South Africa.⁴⁹ Because of dislocation of the people and systematic burning of crops by the MNR, domestic production of grain for 1987 has only provided 8 per cent of market and emergency needs. The remaining 92 per cent 'will have to come from external sources'.⁵⁰ Destabilisation has clearly retarded development and increased dependence on outside aid.

Military destabilisation reflects an old tactic of the US, one very familiar to Nicaragua, but which did not work for Vietnam. The US used the first Somoza to assassinate Sandino after his forces proved too much for the US Marines. As a Nicaraguan, Somoza was much more efficient in carrying out US policy than any occupation force. This time the US has not been able to impose its selected leaders on the Nicaraguan people. The US policy choice is, therefore, to use neighbouring countries, along with disaffected Nicaraguans in the army. When she was US ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick told Costa Rica, which had had no military for decades, to build one or US aid would be cut off.⁵¹ Honduran military and bases on Honduran soil

support the contras. However, command strategy and tactics are in the hands of US commanders who train both Hondurans and the contras. US personnel laid mines in the main harbour of Nicaragua; US pilots fly helicopters and supply planes, as the downing of Eugene Hasenfus' plane demonstrated. US military personnel in a new Intelligence Support Activity (ISA) flew saboteurs inside Nicaragua in 1983 and 1984 and returned fire to cover their retreat. Although some ISA activities were reported to Congress, these activities, engaging regular US troops *inside* Nicaragua, were not.⁵²

The US has built or enlarged eight airfields in Central America since 1983. To move men and equipment in a hurry, the US government tripled the budget of the Special Operations Forces (SOF) in three years, to \$600m in 1986.⁵³ SOF led the invasion of Grenada and heads military training teams. The Pentagon is not required to report its activities to Congress, and its motto summarises the intentions: 'Anything, any time, anywhere, anyhow.'

As the US is to the contras, so South Africa is to the MNR. It trains MNR forces in South Africa at camps in Phalaborwa and Louis Trichardt, with another possible one near Nelspruit. Captured documents, MNR diaries, telex messages and transcribed radio messages confirm that South African army commanders are directing operations.⁵⁴ One document quotes General van der Westhuizen, head of military intelligence, as affirming the commitment of the South African security apparatus to the MNR. In addition, Deputy Foreign Minister Louis Nel three times flew for consultations to Gorongosa camp deep *inside* Mozambique in Sofala province.⁵⁵

South Africa has also been using one of its client states to promote the MNR in the north of Mozambique. Malawi, which has full diplomatic relations with the apartheid regime and has received much development assistance from it, has provided bases and supplies for the MNR. When President Samora Machel visited Malawi in October 1984 and August 1986, President Banda admitted that many of his senior police and military officers were ex-Mozambicans who fled Frelimo because of their role in the colonial war. The implication was that these officers assisted the MNR, with acquiescence from Banda. The leaders of Zimbabwe and Zambia joined Machel in threatening Banda that all transport links through their countries would be closed if he did not remove aid to the MNR. Soon afterwards (19 October 1986) Machel's plane crashed in South African territory, killing him and several Frelimo leaders. Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique all accuse South Africa of sabotaging the plane, at least in part as reprisal for the pressure that was put on Malawi.

Use of neighbouring bases, however, is one of the differences between South Africa and the US. Machel's death did not increase Malawi's resolve; instead, by early 1987, Malawian troops were helping to guard

the Nacala railroad in Mozambique from MNR sabotage to allow refurbishing to proceed. Supply flights from Malawi over northern Mozambique reduced. MNR activity picked up further south in Mozambique, where it could be supplied directly from South Africa. In short, Malawi seems to have reduced its support of MNR operations. The other neighbours (in contrast to the situation in Central America) have stood firmly behind Mozambique from the beginning. Zimbabwe has supplied troops to protect the Beira railway since 1982. By mid-1985 Zimbabwean troops were in joint operations with Frelimo, with Zimbabwean helicopters and paratroopers a deciding factor in some operations. By 1987 estimates of the cost to Zimbabwe were as high as \$1m per day. Tanzania also sent troops for joint operations in northern Mozambique, and both Zimbabwe and Tanzania have been training Mozambican forces.

Because the contras and *bandidos* cannot rely on the people, their tactics are dependent on a very high level of technology and skill in supply. Nicaragua complained in the UN Security Council in December 1985 that the contras used a surface-to-air missile to down a Nicaraguan helicopter over Nicaraguan territory. 'Pirana' speed boats attack the Nicaraguan Coast Guard in Nicaraguan waters. An American commander affirmed that the contras have 'the best technology we've got', complete with electronic eavesdropping equipment on Tiger Island off the Gulf of Fonseca.⁵⁶ The destruction of electricity pylons in Mozambique requires a high level of technical knowledge of explosives. South Africa also uses submarines to pick up MNR leaders and escaping saboteurs from Mozambique's long (1,000 kilometers) and unguarded coast. Mobility and supply for the counter-revolutionaries are provided by fancy helicopters, submarines and speed boats, not by the people organized to assist the insurgents.

Militarisation and privatisation of foreign policy

Destabilisation of a neighbouring country has been part of the militarisation of foreign policy for both the US and South Africa. Negotiations, diplomacy – which mean compromise – have played a minor role in South African and American foreign policy since the escalation of destabilisation in 1981. Choosing the military option, however, is not simply considered the most effective means for the stated policy objectives; it also serves the domestic goal of strengthening the executive in both countries. Secret military operations cannot be fully scrutinised by the legislature, which has the purpose of debating policy openly.

After the exposés of the Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964) and the bombing of Cambodia (1969) without US congressional consent, the Congress tried to reassert its role in foreign policy. The War Powers Act of

1973 allows the President to introduce armed forces overseas only when US forces are under attack, and then only for sixty days unless Congress declares war. In 1974 the Congress also limited cash sales of arms overseas, and from 1975 onwards it required the CIA to report covert operations to the Senate and House Intelligence Committees.⁵⁷ Finally, Congress passed the Freedom of Information Act requiring the US government to release files of citizens who had been under surveillance.

Many viewed these laws as a return to the balance and separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches. However, the conservatives saw them as an attack on the ability of the American government to act expeditiously against its enemies, citing the 'loss' of Iran, Nicaragua and Angola from the American sphere of influence. The Reagan Administration had as its major goal the restoration of presidential authority in order to reassert American interests; Congress, with all its committees and factions, was a cumbersome hindrance to incisive assertion of power. The American president must 'stand tall', not only over the rest of the world, but over the law-makers.

Reagan was successful with this agenda into the second term. The general climate of anti-communism, promoted through the various foundations discussed above, set the theme for the president. With his personal popularity, he was able to act unilaterally and deflect polite congressional questions. After Nicaragua twice took the US government to the World Court, once over the mining of the harbour and once over the embargo, Reagan removed the US, which had been a founding member, from the court. When questioned about the constitutionality of such a unilateral executive action, he claimed that the constitution required US Senate approval for international treaties, but it said nothing about Senate approval to abrogate them.

Resurgence of the CIA was signalled when Reagan appointed William Casey, one of its founders, as director in 1981. From 1973 to 1981, when the CIA came under closer congressional scrutiny, the Central Intelligence Analysis (information-gathering) wing gained prominence over the covert operations wing, but Casey moved immediately to restore the covert actions to its previous prominence. He won restrictions on the Freedom of Information disclosures for the CIA, as well as harsh legal reprisals for anyone who disclosed CIA activities.⁵⁸

As is now well documented, the expanded role of the CIA was not sufficient for some in the executive branch. The National Security Advisor ran extensive covert operations in support of the contras. During the congressional hearings of May-August 1987 the operations were frequently referred to as 'secret government within our government' (Senator Daniel Inouye), for many foreign policy decisions were made, from financing and supplying the contras to trading arms for hostages in the Middle East.

Because the secret operations were mainly for military purposes, several military officers were key to the policy (Colonel MacFarland, Admiral Poindexter, Lieutenant-Colonel North, Major-Generals Secord and Singlaub). They also boasted of their 'can-do' skills, the ability to execute plans expeditiously. Through their military connections, they acquired ships, weapons, missiles and requisitioned military flights for the covert operations.

CIA and National Security Advisor operations are closely intertwined with private firms. Links for recruitment of mercenaries go directly to the CIA, as they did for the war in Rhodesia and still do for Angola. The CIA contributes large sums of money to the contras, which are channelled through private organisations and corporations. Yet it is against the Neutrality Act for any private group to support or participate in military action against any country at peace with the US without a formal declaration of war by Congress. There are also strict restrictions on activities of non-profit organisations which must remain 'educational' and refrain from supporting a particular political line; many of the right-wing groups claim this non-profit (tax-exempt) status. In working closely with several of these groups, the CIA ignores these laws. The congressional hearings have left many of these private, secret links in place. Even if the operations out of the National Security Advisor's office have been curtailed, little has yet been done to delimit the private business operations in funding the contras.

President Reagan continues to deny that he knew profits from arms sales to Iran were used to fund the contras. As the congressional hearings proceeded, however, he admitted knowing about extensive extra-legal operations, not under the scrutiny of his own National Security Council or the Congress, which determined foreign policy. Secret operations greatly strengthen the hand of the executive against the Congress and the American public, who are kept misinformed about activities and relationships. The arms deals are not secret to the adversary (Iran), for they are involved. The wars are not secret to the people bombed. It is the American public and many of their elected representatives who become redundant in the privatisation of foreign policy.

Many questions not answered in the congressional hearings concern the role of drug-running by or for the contras to finance their operations. Court cases are pending to determine whether and how much drugs from Latin America supported the contras. More than one assassination attempt is also possibly linked to the 'back pocket' operations, such as the attempted assassination of Eden Pastora, an ex-*contra* leader who would not be bought off by the CIA to join the other leaders. (Pastora escaped, but three reporters and five of his men were killed, with twenty-six others injured.)⁵⁹

The South African government is very different from the US, but there are three important similarities: (1) the executive has been

strengthened relative to the legislature; (2) the role of covert actions and of the military has increased in policy formulations; (3) liaison of private business and organisations with the executive facilitates avoidance of public debate about foreign policy. In South Africa, these roles are primarily to maintain white supremacy. However, in the 'Total Strategy' policy since 1977, that goal is not simply domestic policy. The 'total onslaught', as the government calls the people's bid for one person-one vote, is perceived as coming from without, as from within, South Africa. 'National security' for the whites is the main foreign policy goal.

The 1984 constitutional change was widely publicised because it established three racial houses of parliament: White, Coloured, Asian; the majority Africans remain totally disenfranchised and unrepresented. An element of the new constitution which did not receive much press attention was the increased powers of the executive, now called the president, not the prime minister. If one or more houses rejects a bill from committee, it is referred to the President's Council for arbitration. Dominated by whites, Council decisions cannot be vetoed by parliament. The President's Council can, therefore, impose its will even though its majority party (white) has a minority of total MPs in parliament. With the parliament reduced to a debating society, final decisions are with the President's Council.

Another executive body, the State Security Council (SSC), is a committee of the cabinet, but has much more power than other cabinet committees. It advises the formulation and implementation 'of national policy and strategy in relation to the security of the Republic',⁶⁰ an assignment broad enough to cover almost any policy. In contrast to other cabinet committees, decisions do not have to be circulated as appendices to cabinet minutes and meetings are not open to cabinet ministers not formally appointed to the SSC. The president is chair with ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Police as well as heads of the National Intelligence Service, the police and the defence forces as members. The increased role of the SSC in foreign policy has downgraded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and considerably increased the role of the military. As Philip H. Frankel, of the University of Witwatersrand, shows:

militarymen are in general placed at strategic points to influence virtually every aspect of public policy. This influence has progressively increased since 1980 as Botha and his military allies have moved to an ever more embracing conception of 'national security' which penetrates into virtually every aspect of political, economic, and cultural life and as the powers of the legislature have been eroded to the advantage of the office of prime minister and the state security network.⁶¹

It is this unique and powerful body (operating mainly in secret) which causes analysts to refer to changes in the South African government as a 'creeping coup d'etat'. For example, the SSC is solely responsible for the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) which handles almost all intelligence work. In addition, as discussed earlier, the DMI commands the MNR in Mozambique. The ex-head of DMI, Lieutenant-General P.W. van der Westhuizen, now serves as a secretary to the SSC. Heading a staff of eighty-seven to serve the SSC, his role is not too different from the National Security Advisor to the US National Security Council.

In contrast to the US, however, under the SSC the penetration of the South African military into all levels of administration has been very systematic. Twelve 'Joint Military Commands' (JMCs) operate at the level of the old provincial councils; these are subdivided into sixty 'sub-JMCs' at the level of metropolitan regions. Mini-JMCs (448 of them) work at the level of local authorities or town councils. The purpose of this network is to contain political resistance, coordinate a broad 'hearts and minds' strategy by improving social conditions in black areas and act as an early warning system to the SSC for potential problems.⁶²

The most important link between private business and the military is Armscor (Armaments Corporation of South Africa), which is the sole procurement agent of arms for the defence forces. Except for a few wholly-owned subsidiaries, Armscor relies on close cooperation with private corporations for research, development and manufacturing of armaments. The ten-man Board is appointed by the president and is responsible to the minister of defence, yet has only two government representatives. The chair and most of the directors are from the private sector, but their names are not revealed for fear of jeopardising their foreign business interests. In fact, most of what Armscor does is highly secret, for it is against the law to disclose 'any information in relation to the acquisition, supply, marketing, importation, export, development, manufacture, maintenance or repair of, or research in connection with armaments by, for, on behalf of, or for the benefit of the Armaments Corporation or a subsidiary company'.⁶³ Armscor, therefore, is a state corporation run almost exclusively by private enterprise and subcontracting thousands of contracts to large and small private corporations. While internal revolt and strikes reduce the profit of most businesses, the most profitable corporations are those linked with the highly subsidised armaments production – at least for the short term.

The South African government has institutionalised the executive-military dominance over parliament, a major structural difference from the separation of powers between the US Congress and the executive. The Congress could reassert its control of the purse over foreign policy and its oversight of covert operations once again. The use of private business and foundations to promote covert operations is not new in

US history, but Congress could tighten those controls also; most of the laws needed are already on the books. The South African parliament, in contrast, has been reduced to an impotent rubber-stamp of the executive will. As even white opposition grew in parliament, decision-making was taken over by the State Security Council, which can be controlled by one party, even a minority party. The constitutional change gave the appearance of bringing non-whites into the system while neutralising the parliament they sat in.

US-South African collaboration

In spite of verbal condemnation of apartheid, the Reagan Administration has increased support for it because of similar ideologies of anti-communism, supported by a heavy dose of racism. The list is long and has been fully documented: increased exchange of military personnel and nuclear scientists; increased sales of 'para-military' equipment; increased trade; increased bank loans; full diplomatic support, especially over the stalling of negotiations on Namibia; diplomatic and material support of Jonas Savimbi of UNITA in Angola.⁶⁴ In October 1986 the US Congress passed a mild South African sanctions bill over the veto of President Reagan. One of his own presidential committees concluded that 'constructive engagement' had failed and conditions were worse, not better, under apartheid.⁶⁵ Yet support for the apartheid regime continues.

Information has begun to emerge which would help to explain the perpetuation of a policy which has not begun to meet its stated goals. It seems that South Africa has not only paralleled the American destabilisation policy, but has directly assisted the Reagan Administration in Central America. CIA chief William Casey and CIA Latin American division chief Duane Clarridge both travelled to South Africa to solicit aid for the contras. In a 'vest pocket' operation run outside normal channels, some sources say a South African cargo corporation, SAFAIR, provided planes to Southern Air Transport which regularly flew weapons to the contras. Lieutenant-Colonel North met Southern Air Transport pilots and said that 'third country' (South Africa) pilots would fly weapons into Nicaragua from El Salvador.⁶⁶

According to an intelligence report dated February 1985, the CIA learned that Eden Pastora had actually received 200,000 tons of weapons from South Africa. However, the CIA said it had no role in the shipment.⁶⁷ In testimony to congressional committees in August 1987 Clarridge denied that any transactions resulted from the trips to South Africa. The talks were, however, apparently part of complicated negotiations in which the CIA would share intelligence with South Africa to be passed on to UNITA in Angola.⁶⁸ At the time, American

law barred the Administration from assisting UNITA, but there was nothing to prevent South Africa from passing on sensitive information on its own.

Several investigations are pursuing both the possible violation of the intent of the Clark Amendment (barring aid to UNITA) and the links between the apartheid regime and aid to the contras. If even partially correct, these covert relations would help explain why President Reagan would not want to sanction an ally which was helping him with important foreign policy goals.

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That cunny Jamma oman: female sensibility in the poetry of Louise Bennett*

In the poem 'Jamaica Oman', the Louise Bennett persona¹ employs an earthy metaphorical proverb to expose, with obvious relish, the jinnalship (resourcefulness) and fortitude of the Jamaican female:

... Oman luck deh a dungle',
Some rooted more dan some,
But as long as fowl a scratch dungle heap.
Oman luck mus come! (SP p.23)

In that body of Jamaican folk wisdom transmitted in proverb, Anansi story and riddle, is the genesis of an indigenous feminist ideology: the paradigm of a submerged and fated identity that must be rooted up, covertly and assiduously. The existential dungle, the repository of the accumulated waste of the society, becomes in the folk iconography the locus of transformation. It is the dungle, and the dehumanising social conditions that allow it, which is the enemy of woman.² Cunning, rather than overt male/female confrontation, is the preferred strategy for maintaining equanimity.

This proverbial cunning of the Jamaican woman is one manifestation of the morally ambiguous craftiness of Anansi, the Akan folk hero transmuted in Jamaican folklore into Brer Nansi, the archetypal

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trickster.³ Folktales of the mighty outwitted by the clever proliferate throughout the African diaspora: the shared history of plantation slavery in the Americas consolidates within the psyche of African peoples in the hemisphere, cultural continuities, ancestral memories of sabotage and marronage, systemic resistance to servitude. It is within this broader tradition of neo-African folk consciousness – the Anansi syndrome – that Bennett’s elaboration of the Jamaican female sensibility can be best understood.

This thematic/stylistic analysis of Bennett’s rendering of the Jamaican female psychology is organised under two broad subject headings: ‘Eena Yard’ and ‘Outa Road’, to quote a Bennett persona. I will examine domestic relations: male-female, and mother-child; and extra-domestic affairs: women and work, and women and politics.

Eena yard

It is the positive, more so than the negative manifestations of the tricksterism of Anansi that Bennett affirms in her tribute to the resourcefulness of the Jamaican female in ordering her domestic affairs with the Jamaican male, amicably:

Jamaica oman cunny, sah!
 Is how dem jinnal so?
 Look how long dem liberated
 And de man dem never know!
 Look how long Jamaica oman
 – Modder, sister, wife, sweetheart –
 Outa road an eena yard deh pon
 A dominate her part! (SP p.21)

In the poem ‘Jamaica Oman’, the Bennett persona differentiates this tradition of indigenous feminism from ‘foreign lan Oman lib’, a more recent social movement:

An long before Oman lib bruck out
 Over foreign lan
 Jamaica female wasa work
 Her liberated plan! (SP p.22)

The legendary Maroon, Nanny, who ‘teck her body/Bounce bullet back pon man’ (SP p.21), remains alive in Jamaican folklore because of her militancy against British soldiers. The allusion to Nanny situates contemporary Jamaican ‘oman lib’ within a long established heritage of consolidated male/female defence of cultural and political sovereignty.⁴

‘Foreign lan Oman lib’ is rejected by the Bennett persona because it

fails to acknowledge the strategic differences between men and women:

Jamaica oman know she strong
She know she tallawah
But she no want her pickney-dem
Fi start call her 'Puppa'.
So de cunny Jamma oman
Gwan like pants-suit is a style
An Jamaica man no know she wear
De trousiz all de while! (SP p.22)

This 'tallawah' Jamaican women knows when to be appropriately 'weak' as the complementary poem 'Tan-up-Seat' illustrates. The speaker there makes it clear that ritualised codes of decorum ought to govern male-female behaviour, particularly when a tired woman recognises an able-bodied male seated on a crowded tramcar:

Me doan sey man kean tired to
But wen dem want show-off,
Dem sey ooman is 'weaka sex',
An ooman frail and sof.

But wen man go pon tram and lef
Dem mannas a dem yard,
Dem gwan like ooman strong like man
An cruff an rough an hard!

An sometime when shame bun dem shirt
Dem start gwan like dem shy,
An sidung-man kean look straight eena
Tan-up ooman y'eye! (JL p.49)

It is the tenuous compromise that Jamaican women often make in order to live with their men which Bennett treats with such consummate craftsmanship in 'Jamaica Oman'. An excellent example of comic irony is the 'role reversal' by means of which women appear to have appropriated the male role as head of the household, but are indeed simply functioning true to nature:

Some backa man a push, some side-a
Man a hole him han,
Some a lick sense eena man head,
Some a guide him pon him plan! (SP p.22)

Further, women will tolerate disparaging labels of powerlessness as long as they retain actual power:

Neck an neck an foot an foot wid man
She buckle hole her own;

While man a call her 'so-so rib'
Oman a tun backbone! (SP p.22)

The speaker's disdainful allusion to the biblical narrative of origins conveys her contempt for a sanctimonious patriarchal prejudice that dehumanises women in the name of religion.

Bennett's portrayal of the cunny Jamma oman is not a solemn study of manipulative female politics, or simpering subservience. Good-natured humour, decidedly shading into satire, characterises her critique. For the poem ends on this ambiguous note:

Lickle by lickle man start praise her,
Day by day de praise a grow;
So him praise her, so it sweet her,
For she wonder if him know. (SP p.23)

Two mutually ironic interpretations of this verse suggest that (a) even when men concede the benefits of female power they may not be conscious of the jinnalship whereby women only appear to defer to conventional notions of appropriate behaviour, and (b) men may indeed suspect the ruses of women, and simply allow them free reign. In this second reading, jinnalship would not be the exclusive perquisite of the female, as the poem 'Racket' illustrates.

The speaker there berates the wiliness of the Jamaican male who resorts to subterfuge to escape emotional and material indebtedness during the season of goodwill to all persons:

As it come to Chrismus time
Dem drop de gal-frien 'biff!'
Becausen dem no waan fi gi
De gal no Chrismus gif! (SP p.21)

The 'biff' 'gif' rhyme is particularly apposite. The onomatopoeic 'biff' – unlike a 'buff' – is lightweight; the rhyme thus carefully balances the weight of the negligent boyfriend's commitment against the worth of the missing gift. The deliberated drop is a temporary helping down of a burden to be assumed again, at a more convenient season:

Dem bwoy dah gwan too bad, yaw mah,
An smaddy haffi crack it!
Las ear, two weeks from Chrismus Day,
One po gal jus seh 'feh',
Her bwoy-frien start mech nize an row
An get bex an go weh!
Him meck de nice-nice gal spen Chrismus
Widout a bwoy-frien,

An de las week a January
Him crawl back een again! (SP p.21)

In an ironic reading of the poem one begins to suspect the speaker of a bit of unconscious malice. The intensity of her righteous indignation on behalf of the victim, as expressed in the opening four lines of the poem, seems somewhat excessive for the offence:

Tan! Oonoo know is what wrong wid
De bwoy-dem nowadays?
Dem is a set a raskill, cho!
Dem got real dutty ways: (SP p.20)

By the final three lines, when the speaker is prepared to obliterate the duly-punished-male-turned-duppy, one is sure that the critique of gross male negligence has been inverted. The joke is on the mourner who is bawling louder than the primary victim:

Ef dat gal was like me
Next ear him hooda haffi pick
Quarrel wid him duppy! (SP p.21)

The ambiguous nature of Jamaican male/female relationships, satirised in several Bennett poems, appears antithetical to the single-minded zealotry of divisive 'foreign lan Oman lib' which has its Jamaican equivalent in the predominantly middle-class women's federation movement established in the 1940s under the patronage of the governor's wife, Lady Huggins.⁵ This kind of organised movement is essentially different from the perennial struggles of predominantly working-class women to root out their dungle luck. Bennett's treatment of the movement is equivocal. In the poem 'Bans O' Ooman!', for example, one may detect satire, despite the speaker's laudatory intentions. In 'Mass Wedding' and 'Registration' tonal irony is even more readily apparent.

In 'Bans O'Ooman!' the female persona recreates the spontaneous excitement of the launching of the Jamaica Federation of Women, designed to bring together women 'high an low, miggie, suspended,/Every different kine o' class' (JL p.41). The comic use of the adjective 'suspended', which expresses the speaker's penchant for malapropism, also appropriately intimates the merely temporary suspension of ordinary class values which appear unimportant in the euphoria of the celebratory moment. Indeed, when the woman who finds herself on the periphery of the gathering in St George's Hall, attempts to force her way to the centre of the event, she discovers that there is definite resistance to her upward social movement:

Me was a-dead fe go inside
 But wen me start fe try,
 Ooman queeze me, ooman push me,
 Ooman frown and cut dem y'eye. (JL p.41)

Undaunted, she resorts to subterfuge, the rear-entry politics of potential sabotage:

Me tek me time an crawl out back
 Me noh meck no alarm,
 But me practice bans o'tactics
 Till me ketch up a platform. (JL p.41)

In the final two stanzas of the poem the satire becomes more pointed as one suspects a disjuncture of grandiose intention and actual accomplishment:

Ef yuh ever hear dem program!
 Ef yuh ever hear dem plan!
 Ef yuh ever hear de sinting
 Ooman gwine go do to man!
 Federation boun to flourish,
 For dem got bans o' nice plan,
 And now dem got de heart and soul
 Of true Jamaica ooman. (JL p. 41)

The optimistic certainty of the last two lines seems premature.

One of the many plans of the Federation of Women, to ensure that women enter into properly legal relationships with men, is the subject of 'Mass Wedding'. Rex Nettleford's gloss on the poem is succinct:

The late Mary Morris Knibb of Kingston was a pioneer in the fight against bachelor fatherhood (taken up again in 1965, notably by the Soroptomist Club of Jamaica led by Edith Clarke, the anthropologist and social worker). One solution offered by Mrs Knibb was the mass wedding, organised at little expense to the marrying parties, many of whom might have been living in common-law relationships for years. (JL p.30)

The speaker, who is hastily trying to secure 'one boonoonoonos man' (JL p.30) whom she has just met, seems on the surface to advocate the idea of the mass wedding. But when one notes the imagery of coercion she employs, one concludes that even she is aware that the frantic speed of the enterprise may be matched by the unwilling bridegroom's prowess at escape:

Dat lady Mrs. Married Knibbs,
 She is a real Godsen'

For every man now mus tun husban,
Dem kean be noh mo' bwoy frien'.

Ah she meck nine-toe Berty
Wed kaas eye Sue you know?
An she force awn Mary Fowl-head
Pon Miss Biddy cousin Joe.

So fine a good man dat yuh hooda
Like fe stan up beside,
Den see Miss Knibbs an yuh will be
Mongs de nex mass wedden brides. (JL p.31)

The speaker's vacillation between the redundant 'Mrs. Married Knibbs' and the contextually deficient 'Miss Knibbs' seems unintentional and thus reinforces the poem's irony that ultimately the legal distinction is functionally unimportant.

The class values of the Mary Morris Knibbses, as evidenced in 'Mass Wedding', go against the grain of a long established Jamaican folk conviction that one ought not to marry, unless one can do it in style; they also violate the well-documented Jamaican superstition that the legal marriage ceremony can itself undermine the vulnerable balance of extra-legal male/female arrangements.

In the poem 'Registration', Bennett satirises yet another campaign of the well-intentioned Federation to coerce the working-class Jamaican male into conformity to the demands of middle-class propriety: the drive to register all fathers. The Bennett persona gleefully advocates the plan, citing three Jamaican proverbs to confirm the unequivocal authority of the proposed law:

Every sore foot got him blue-stone,
Every tief got him las' deal,
Noh care how smaddy dah-gwan bad
Sinting deh fe spokes him wheel. (JL p.42)

Despite the apparent commonality of folk and middle-class values, what the speaker proceeds to do, apparently unwittingly, is to draw satirical attention to the social distance between the respectable middle-class women of the Federation, who have decent responsible husbands, and the unfortunate, husbandless, working-class women whom the new legislation will seek to elevate. Upstanding middle-class women, with whom the speaker empathises, can afford to antagonise delinquent males because their own houses are in order:

Guess how de man dem gwine bex wid
De ooman Federation
Me glad mose o' de lady dem

Married an got dem good husban.
 For like how somuch bwoy gwan weh
 And Jamaica short o'man,
 Dem ooman wat pass de law gwine have
 De dickans fe hook one! (JL p.42)

In a delightfully ambiguous line the speaker allows that unmarried middle-class women might themselves have a hard time hooking a man of their own in this period of social turbulence.

Long-chin James, who understandably objects to the legislation, is cursed by the woman: 'go weh, man a debil!' (JL p.42). But his quick repartee is: 'dat is not no cuss,/For ooman a debil-mumma/So we kean tell which is wus' (JL p.42). James is indeed perceptive. For what is evident from Bennett's wide-ranging portrayal of male-female relationships is that working-class men and women have much more in common than do middle-class and working-class women.

But there is also evidence in Bennett's poetry of the internalisation of the values of middle-class domestic order by working-class women who believe that the state of wife, however transitory, is intrinsically superior to that of 'baby-mother' or girlfriend. In the words of one woman, who praises the war for its side benefits:

Soh me wi help de war, an ef
 De war shoulda help me
 Fe get married, me husban can
 Gwan fight fe him country.
 An ef my husban even dead,
 Me don't seh me won't cry,
 But de joy dat ah was married
 Wi meck me satisfy. (JL pp.100-101)

Similarly, the speaker in the poem 'Praises' expresses great joy that with the establishment of the Sandy Gully American base, and the attendant employment opportunities it offers, her status changes:

Look how me an Joe did live bad.
 But praise to Sandy Gully!
 As him get de fus week pay him do
 So baps – married to me.
 An now him meck love sweeter mah
 Him style me now as 'Honey'
 Hear him – 'Ah dat way bout yuh Hons
 Ah hopes yuh goes fo' me.' (JL pp.98-9)

There is the inevitable irony that the 'ten-poun baby pram' (JL p.99), bought in the first flush of prosperity, has to be converted into a fish cart when Joe is laid off and must revert to his usual occupation. Even

though he is later recruited for the migrant labour scheme to the US, his wife's anticipation – 'Wat a way we dah-go bruck sport/Wen we ketch a U.S.A.' (JL p.99) must be tempered by the advice of yet another Bennett persona:

Betta yuh tan home fight yuh life
Than go a-sea go lose i.
De same sinting wey sweet man mout
Wi meck him lose him head,
Me read eena newspapa sey
Two farm-man meet dem dead! (JL p.94)

But the new wife's optimism is unshakeable:

Me still love me Jamaica mam,
But like a tenkful wife
He haffa praise American
Fe put me eena life. (JL p.99)

It is this aspiration that their families be 'put eena life' which governs the child-rearing practices of Bennett's vocal women. The proverbial ring of James's uncomplimentary observation that 'ooman a debilmumma' reinforces the fact that women – married or not – are largely responsible for the socialisation of children in Jamaica. Though there are very few Bennett poems that deal specifically with mother/child relations, there is a group, the theme of which is the aggressive ambition of mothers that their children, particularly their sons, acquire education, the entree to middle-class culture. Fluency in the English language is an important rite of passage, which must be accomplished whether by formal schooling or as a consequence of living 'in foreign' or 'in town'.

The male persona in the poem 'Writing Home' expresses retrospective gratitude to his mother for her attention to his education: 'Ah did soh glad yuh did force me fe teck de zamination/Far now, ah can demands a job fe suit me edication' (JL p.117). There is pathos in the disparity between the young man's expectations and what he appears equipped to do. Indeed, the muted humour in the poem derives from the fact that though unemployed, he has joined a trade union and is 'on strike':

I is not workin now but ah
Jine in a labour set
An ah 'ope to keep awn strikin
Tell some esteem jab ah get. (JL p.116)

A satirical portrait of an indulgent, self-congratulatory mother is given in the poem 'New Scholar'. The mother's misguided concern for her son's well-being is apparent in her words of advice to the boy's

teacher, on the boy's first day in school:

No treat him rough, yaw, Teacher;
Him is a sickly chile:
As yuh touch him hard him meck nize –
Some people seh him pwile.

Teck time wid him, yaw, Teacher –
If him rude and start fi rave
Dis beat anodder bwoy, an him
Wi frighten an behave.

For nuff time when him rude a yard
An woan hear me at all
Ah just beat de bed-poas hard, mah,
An yuh waa fi hear Jack bawl! (SP pp.8-9)

A similarly satirical poem is 'Uriah Preach', which holds up to comic scrutiny the self-incriminatory pride of misguided maternalism. Rhonda Cobham-Sander's gloss on the poem is accurate: 'Bennett recounts the vicarious pleasure taken by a Jamaican mother in the accomplishments of her children and especially in her son's ability to use his occasional ascent to the pulpit to lambast the family's enemies':⁶

Fi-me famby is no peaw-peaw,
Me daughter Sue dah teach;
An when rain fall or parson sick
Me son Uriah preach.

Him climb up pon de pulpit, him
Lean over an look dung,
Him look pon all we enemy
An lash dem wid him tongue.

Him tell dem off, dem know is dem,
Dem heart full to de brim;
But as Uriah eena pulpit
Dem cyaan back-answer him. (SP pp.60-61)

The general tenor of the mother/child relations described in Bennett's poetry is aphoristically expressed by the perceptive speaker in 'Bear Up': 'Noh mock mawga cow, him a bull muma' (JL p.53).

Outa road

The majority of Bennett's women are engaged in traditionally female, working-class occupations: domestic labour and higglering. Both are low-paid, higglering far less so in recent times, with the rise of the internationally travelled female merchant class. The supply of prospective

domestic labourers far exceeds demand, and employer/employee relations often reflect the market-value of the domestic servant. But a definite shift in the balance of power occurs when domestic servants come to recognise that their labour is essential to the smooth functioning of the middle-class household.

The female servant in the poem 'Seeking a Job', for example, makes it clear that domestic labour is not her preferred avocation. She will only descend to certain quite specific tasks, stated in her job description:

Ah cook an wash, but sake o' me nails
Ah doan clear floor again
But a can get a gal fe do
Dat fe yuh now-and-den. (JL p.192)

Furthermore, if antagonised, she will simply withdraw her services:

... the las' ooman ah work wid
Didn' have no fault to fine.

Doah wen she start tek liberty wid me
Ah lif up and walk out,
For as ole-time people sey 'yuh play
Wid dawg dem lick yuh mout'.

Ah hooden stan her facetiness,
Far we wasn' company. (JL p.191)

A humorous example of class antagonism resolved by the conjuring up of a fictitious male relative occurs in the poem 'Me Bredda'. The speaker, a vociferous domestic servant, cows a middle-class woman into submission in a dispute arising from the servant's tardiness in arriving for work – the very first day.

The housewife attempts to fire the woman on the spot, but is bombarded by a spate of abusive rhetoric:

Oono call me bredda fi me!
Beg yuh tell him come yah quick!
Tell him bring him pelt-yuh-kin cow-cod
An bus-yuh-open stick!

Me naw meck no joke wid you, mah!
Quick and brisk an pay me off,
Or ah call me bredda in yah
Meck him beat you till yuh sof! (SP p.18)

One is seduced into admiring the daring subterfuge of the outrageous servant:

Yuh would like fi know me bredda?
Me cyaan help you eena dat.

Me hooda like know him meself,
For is me one me parents got! (SP p.19)

Yet one senses the moral impropriety of her victory; this trickster sabotages the very economic system she pretends to enter, employing Anansi tactics to accomplish pragmatic goals. She is a remarkable contrast to the uncharacteristically submissive domestic servant in 'My Dream', who does not openly rebel against her truly exploitative cousin/employer. She displaces her aggression on the clothes that she is forced to launder:

Ah swear ah mus fine a way
Fi wounded cousin Rose,
An ah tink it hooda hut her
If ah start maltreat de clothes. (SP p.112)

She consoles herself with the proverbial certainty that moral rightness will inevitably be restored:

Dog a sweat but long hair hide i,
Mout a laugh, but heart a leap!
Everything wha shine no gole piece. (SP p.113)

This sublimatory use of proverbs in a potentially explosive context of class antagonism is an excellent example of linguistic subterfuge, in-direction as a strategy to preserve psychic wholeness. These apparently divergent responses to domestic labour/economic exploitation – overt and covert sabotage – are essentially manifestations of the Anansi syndrome.

The Anansi mentality is also evident in the behaviour of the higglers who speak in 'South Parade Peddler' and 'Candy-Seller'. Their dramatic monologues counterpoint open cajoling of potential customers with sotto voce invective:

... Come here nice white man
Don't pass me by soh sah!
See me beggin by de roadside
Come buy a nice wangla.
Wen W'ite people go fe ugly
Massa dem ugly sah.
Koo 'ow dat deh man face heng dung
Lacka wen jackass feel bad. (JL p.29)

Another higgler, who eloquently affirms the importance of her trade for the well-being of her family, is a single parent whose market basket is causing offence to fellow passengers on a bus:

Yuh can cuss me, yuh can beat me,
Yuh can call me all de 'it';
Do anything yuh want wid me
But lef de basket.

For dis basket is me all-in-all,
Me shillin, pence and poun;
It is me husban and me frien,
Me jewel and me crown.

Me ha six pickney – an sence me
Stop teck dem Pa to court
Dis dutty, brucksy basket yah
Is dem ongle support. (SP p.92)

Attempts by women to support themselves in non-traditional occupations is the theme of 'Footworks'. The speaker lauds the first female recruit into the Jamaica Constabulary Force:

We haffe do we bes, tun eas,
Tun wes, tun right about
We kean afford fe meck de man
Police dem beat we out. (JL p.70)

The choice of 'afford' appropriately emphasises the increased wages that women will earn in a traditionally male occupation and which they dare not relinquish simply because they cannot manage the heavy police boots:

Lif up yah foot gal, practise up
Fe tun ooman police.
Oonoo mus bring two clothes-iron
Fe tie pon oonoo foot.
So we can practise how fe wear
De heavy police boot. (JL p.70)

The clothes iron selected to assist women in their new field of work is a comic reminder of the domestic labour force from which they have now graduated. The final verse of the poem humorously suggests that there is no essential difference in the capacities of the male and female recruits:

Go outa jail and watch good wha de
Man-police dem do
Yuh mighta fine nuff o' dem wid
De same trouble as yuh. (JL p.71)

Women's engagement in the political process is similarly motivated by the desire to share with men the benefits of increased economic

opportunities. Pragmatism characterises the attitudes of Bennett's women to politics. In an interesting pair of poems, 'New Govanah' and 'Mrs. Govanah', it is evident that affairs of state are acknowledged as important only to the degree that they guarantee perceptible material benefits. Mervyn Morris's gloss on 'New Govanah' is lucid:

The poem ridicules the fuss made over the arrival of a new governor (Sir John Huggins) in 1943. People, it says, are behaving as though the Governor were really valuable and worth worrying about, like steak, or white rice, or condensed milk – commodities scarce during the war . . . Unlike those people who have dressed up, the speaker is not in awe of the Governor, and she wonders whether (in accordance with a common Jamaican decency) he has brought any message or parcel from her boyfriend Joe . . . There are courteous ironies within the final stanza. The Governor is implied to be irrelevant and out of key with ordinary needs and values: he has brought nothing for her, neither material things nor values. (SP pp. 130-131)

Similarly, in 'Mrs. Govanah', the speaker mistakes the commotion caused by the ritual passage of the Governor's wife through Nathan's department store as being precipitated by the distribution of 'free ile or green banana'. (JL p.126). Images of oral gratification are frequently used by these women in cynical reference to organised politics. In the poem 'Rightful Way' the persona gives advice on the proper way to vote, noting that politicians, the main beneficiaries of adult suffrage, would be deprived of nourishment if the system were sabotaged:

Yuh know how de genkleman dem
 Weh dah-gi speech all bout
 Hooda bex fe know yuh help fe teck
 De pap out o' dem mout. (JL p.135)

Female politicians are not exempt from ridicule. The speaker in the poem 'Which One' questions the competence of all the candidates up for election, including the female representative:

Pose we try a ooman an she
 Teck it put eena her lap
 An go get up absent-minded
 Meck we constitution drop! (JL p.136)

A more sympathetic, though equally problematic image of a female politician is given in 'Big Tings', which documents the in-fighting between two high-powered male politicians, the Hon Sir Alexander Bustamante and the Rev E.E. McLaughlin:⁷

De po' women councillor nevah sey a ting,
 She stay quiet like lamb,

She watch all de man dem antics
An shet up her mout 'pam'.
Me noh blame de po' ooman mah,
Becausen is she one,
And de po' ting mus feel frighten
Mongs dem blood-t'irsty man. (JL p.151)

The female politician's silence is as eloquently damning as the verbosity of the American consultant in 'Distinguish Merican', imported to assist in launching the 'Be Jamaican, Buy Jamaican' campaign.

But wen de speakas leggo speech
An Amy ask wha dat,
Hear Me: 'Wuds, wuds, dem deh is wuds,
Is pure wuds dem a-chat.'
Hear Amy: 'Wuds? Wha kine o' wuds?'
Me say: 'Gran wuds, me dear,
Wuds can' express de wuds,
Dat man mout full o' wuds yuh hear!' (JL p.158)

The empowerment of the Jamaican woman, as portrayed in Louise Bennett's substantial poetry, is not accomplished by mere dependence on the flatulent rhetoric of politicians – though participation in the political process is essential for all:

Everybody got a vote, an
Every vote gwine swell de score;
Missa Issa, Missa Hanna,
An de man wat sweep de store. (JL p.129)

What is of equal consequence is that meta-political conviction of intrinsic worth, validated by the proverbial wisdom of the folk, that 'ooman day wi come at las' (JL p.93). Out of the compost heap of history the cunny Jamma oman, in her maternal role of mother hen, must root up for herself the prophetic certainty that 'oman luck mus come!' (SP p.23).

References

References cited parenthetically in text indicated by JL refer to Louise Bennett's *Jamaica Labrish*, edited by Rex Nettleford (Kingston, Sangster's, 1966). The orthography of this collection differs from that of the later, more readable *Selected Poems*, edited by Mervyn Morris (Kingston, Sangster's, 1982), references to which are cited parenthetically in text indicated by SP.

- 1 For two accounts of Bennett's use of persona, see Mervyn Morris's 'Introduction' to Louise Bennett, *Selected Poems*, op. cit., xvii-xviii and Lloyd Brown, *West Indian Poetry* (Boston, 1978), p.116.
- 2 See, for example, the poignant description of the dungle in chapter 1 of Orlando

- Patterson, *The Children of Sisyphus* (London, 1964).
- 3 See Laura Tanna, 'Anansi — Jamaica's trickster hero', *Jamaica Journal* (Vol.16, no. 2, May 1983).
 - 4 See, for example, Lucille Mathurin, *The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery* (Institute of Jamaica, 1975), pp.34-7.
 - 5 For an autobiographical account of her career in Jamaica, see Molly Huggins, *Too Much To Tell* (London, 1967).
 - 6 Rhonda Cobham-Sander, 'The creative writer and West Indian society: Jamaica 1900-50' (Diss. U. of St Andrews, 1981; Ann Arbor, UMI, 1984), p.241.
 - 7 For an abbreviated description of the affair, see Rex Nettleford's gloss on the poem in *Jamaica Labrish*, op. cit., p.150.

Storms of the Heart

An anthology of Black Arts and culture

Edited by Kwesi Owusu

This is the first major Black Arts anthology covering a broad range of art forms, media and creative approaches. The book offers an overview of the work produced by African, Asian and Caribbean artists in Britain today, exploring their challenges and assessing their impact on British culture.

Thirty-four contributors define their priorities and creative intentions, establishing the bases of dialogue and discussion through their own work and experience. Significantly, Black photographers, poets, musicians, dancers, actors, writers, and oraturists speak for themselves, instead of being spoken for by critics and academics. Together they reflect the dynamism of the Black arts movement and its impact on British society.

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Festivals of the oppressed*

It's always risky for writers to theorise about their work, and it's especially dangerous to do so contemporaneously. At present, I stand in particular risk of being hoist by my own petard. Last year, I had two plays in production, one of which exemplified the principles and ideas that I'm about to outline in a startlingly precise fashion.¹ I have to admit, however, that the other bore almost no relation to what I'm going to talk about – or rather, indeed, could be seen to stand in *contradiction* to much of what I'm going to say.

The reason I am embarking on this dangerous project is that I think we in the arts are in the middle of a war, and we've got to get in there and engage. The war is, of course, that between the last few brave defenders of modernism, of the avant-garde project, of the arts this century, and the ever-expanding hordes of not so much post- as unambiguously *anti*-modernists, responding with unalloyed glee to every new aesthetic demystified, each new theory debunked, each new building demolished. Reading the despatches from the battlefield, however, I am struck by a strange delusion in the minds of the most fervent of the shock troops of reactionary chic. That delusion is the idea that the artistic and the political avant-garde, the modernist and the Marxist traditions, have been if not in bed together then at least always fellow-travellers, walking

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in more or less the same direction down roughly the same side of the street.

In fact, it seems to me that there have been only two periods this century when that was even remotely true: the first being the early '20s, the era of expressionism, futurism, constructivism and Dada; and the second being the late '60s, the period in which I reached adulthood. And it's perhaps because of the fact that I am a militantly unrepentant child of that time that I am particularly concerned to see the development of my art form within the context of the social and political changes taking place around it.

For a playwright, that isn't hard to do – because I think it's undeniable that the main mouthpiece of political radicalism in the arts in post-war Britain has been the play, and except for a few brief shining televisual moments, the stage play. Further, I think that plays have not only expanded the vocabulary of social protest but contributed to its agenda. In 1956, it was a stage play (*Look Back In Anger*) that invented the angry young man, the socially uprooted, existentially precarious child of the 1944 Education Act, appalled by Suez but paralysed by Hungary. In the mid-'60s, it was a television film (*Cathy Come Home*) which exposed the public squalor which private affluence had allowed to accumulate and fester in the cities, and articulated the passionate but essentially social-democratic demand that Cathy's homelessness be planned away.

And in the late '60s, it was the theatre – albeit not always in theatre buildings – which expressed in the starkest terms the conviction that the working class had been seduced from its true revolutionary purpose by the lush blandishments of consumerism, that the future of the revolutionary project lay primarily with the peasants of the Third World (and their expatriated cousins in the first), and that the only function for white radicals in the metropolitan countries was to act as a kind of fifth column, to operate as it were behind enemy lines, to undermine the enemy's morale and to disrupt the numbing razzmatazz of the capitalist spectacle. For political militants like the German Red Army Fraction and the American Weathermen – and, on a comparatively minuscule scale, the British Angry Brigade – the ripping away of capitalism's dainty consumerist screen was a literal matter of bombing boutiques. For the new playwrights and playmakers of the late '60s, the site of struggle was metaphorical, using cultural forms to subvert and disarm the *Zeitgeist*. You could say, indeed, that the artistic project was if anything closer to the heart of the late '60s than the political or paramilitary one, and if you did, you could well be right.

* * *

My own intervention in this discourse began at a particularly

significant juncture. My first professionally produced play was finished in June 1970, the month of Edward Heath's election victory; within months it was clear that reports of the death of the working class had been much exaggerated. Indeed, it appeared that the working class had learnt lessons from its own memorialists, as new (or perhaps more accurately, rediscovered) political forms like the sit-in, the work-in, and the occupation joined the more conventional mass strike in the armoury of industrial protest. It is no surprise that young, radical theatre-makers threw themselves eagerly into the struggle, producing plays which trumpeted their solidarity with the insurgent dockers, shipyard workers, railmen, and miners, rising in a crescendo to early 1974, when the second of two great miners' strikes brought the Heath government to its knees.

But, of course, this seeming unity of purpose masked deepening divisions on the left, divisions mirrored among socialist playwrights. In the late '60s, there had been a sort of fragile accord among the various manifestations and fractions of the new left, as differences were sunk in the interests of the struggle against the Vietnam War. And while hippies and yippies, funkies and tankies demonstrated and even worked together (with only the Socialist Labour League permanently rehearsing the impeccably principled reasons *Why They Were Not Marching*), the equally disparate branches of the theatrical left felt themselves to be operating within a shared artistic and political consensus that could encompass a spectrum from the steeliest social realist or agit-propagator to the wackiest exponent of the wildest reaches of the avant garde.

Beneath the superficial certainties of the early '70s, however, this alliance was beginning to splinter and fragment. Like the burgeoning Trotskyite groups, some political playwrights saw the working class-militancy of the early '70s as a spectacular confirmation of traditional Marxism-Leninism. Others, like the libertarian and anarchist groupings, were attracted to increasingly radical forms of social experimentation, posing a dramatic challenge to traditional forms and hierarchies in the here and now. And as the libertarians in the squats became progressively distanced from the Leninists outside the factory gates, so the performance artists (in particular) grew increasingly remote from the more didactically political groups with whom they had previously collaborated.

Obscured by the struggle, these contradictions appeared in stark relief in the wake of the Tory defeat of February 1974 and the dramatic evaporation of proletarian militancy which followed. Every generation of socialists confronts a moment of truth, when the glad confidences of morning must give way to more considered and durable forms of commitment – the moment when the fainthearts start packing their bags, rehearsing their excuses, and looking for the exit. For the British class of '68, I think that moment was the spring and summer of 1975, as

inflation nudged 30 per cent, the unions surrendered to the Wilson pay policy, the left slid to abject defeat over Europe, and the long-looked-for victory of the peoples of Indochina gave birth, among other things, to Pol Pot's Kampuchea. Increasingly, the limits of economic militancy were becoming clearer, with even the most zealous Trotskyite beginning to suspect that, far from having struck to bring down the government, the miners might well have brought down the government in order to win their strike. At the same time, the political inadequacies, and terrible human consequences of the absolutist revolutionary model were bitterly reaffirmed.

Even the positive developments were riven with painful contradictions. One of the effects of the industrial upsurge of 1972-4 was to delay, or at least to mask, the growth of feminism in Britain – but by 1975, the women's movement was able to mount and sustain a highly successful mass campaign against threatened amendments to the Abortion Act. Similarly, while the white aristocrats of labour had withdrawn from the commanding heights of the struggle, black workers were demonstrating, in the sweatshops of the east Midlands and elsewhere, that they were not prepared to submit to exploitation just because Labour was in power. Both these movements, of course, contained a challenge not just to the class enemy without but to the comrades and brothers within. In 1972, feminist demands were ignored if not derided in the interests of the industrial struggle against the Tory government; as the dockers marched against Heath it was conveniently forgotten that four years before significant numbers of the same dockers had marched for Enoch Powell. But by the end of 1975, the '68 generation had lost its innocence, and the section of that generation that had gone into the theatre began to appreciate that anybody seriously attempting to represent the times that followed was inevitably going to be dealing with complexity, contradiction, and even just plain doubt.

The political theatre of the late '70s reflected the new mood in a number of ways. Overall, political plays became more analytical, more discursive, more about worrying contradictions than amplifying blasts of anguish or triumph. In the mainstream theatre, the so-called 'state of England play' sought to analyse the social malaise in historical and cultural rather than crudely economic terms; in the alternative theatre, plays were as likely to address the debilitating effects of working-class alcoholism as the dastardly machinations of late capitalism or the craven reformism of the labour bureaucracies. And the emerging feminist theatre took considerable pleasure – and gave it, too – in using theatre not so much as a platform for the proclamation of eternal truths, as a laboratory for the testing, under various conditions, of new ways of relating to each other and the world; often through forms that stood at eccentrically oblique angles to the content they sought to embrace. Thus male aggression was armlocked in the wrestling ring, and

glamour demystified amid the sequined glitter of the cod cabaret.

The fact that neither socialist nor feminist theatre – nor any combination of the foregoing – was prepared for the Thatcherite blitzkrieg did not distinguish it markedly from the rest of the left population. Similarly, many radical playwrights initially saw the Thatcher government as no more than a rerun of the early '70s, and the early '80s consequently saw something of a revival of the kind of cartoon agit-prop that had been in such vogue ten years before. But it didn't take long for people inside the theatre to realise what was painfully being realised outside it too – that Thatcherism was not Heathism in skirts, that it was a new and much more dangerous phenomenon because its combination of energetic and bracing economic liberalism with the no-nonsense, home-truth certainties of social tradition and authority succeeded in appealing to at least something in a sufficiently large majority of people to threaten almost permanent electoral success. And against that all the funny voices and joke-shop police hats and game-show metaphors seemed, to put it mildly, an inadequate response.

* * *

Before considering what an adequate response might look like, I think it's useful to consider how the theatre as a whole has responded to the challenge of the New Order. In some ways, the new realism has not been entirely negative. There was something rather cosy and self-regarding about the middle-class, proto-yuppy audience in the Warehouse Theatre or the Royal Court (or on occasions the Lyttleton), applauding the collapse of civilisation as they relied on it and thrilling to calls for their own expropriation. Similarly, in the arena of production, I'm sure I wasn't alone in feeling that the ascetic minimalism of the late '70s had outlived its usefulness – in welcoming the end of the epoch in which all theatrical art aspired to the condition of Jonathan Miller's one-bench *Measure for Measure* (with some stern uncompromising spirits asserting that even that bench was a bit lush). But it's now clear that the revival of theatrical spectacle – the move that gave us the National Theatre's *Oresteia* and *Mysteries* and I suppose the RSC's *Nicholas Nickleby* – has mutated into the much fêted phenomenon of the new British musical, ever more dazzling in form, ever more empty of content. Am I alone in feeling that in addition to people speaking *less* – the very condition of the medium – *people* are speaking less in musicals? That a common factor in the recent smasheroos is the absence of human beings in the cast of characters? *The Little Shop of Horrors* stars a man-eating plant. *Cats* is about small furry domestic animals. *Chess* concerns a game in which two silent men – backed in this case by banks of television monitors – move small pieces of turned wood across a chequered board. One of the stars of *Time* was a hologram, and the

other Cliff Richard. If *A Chorus Line* was the paradigmatic Me Decade musical, the profession solemnly and narcissistically contemplating its own navel, then surely *Starlight Express* is the quintessential musical of the '80s, with a cast consisting entirely of inanimate objects, computer programmed not to rollerskate into each other, the first genuine artefact of the post-human age. But even when the new musical does address itself to dreary old people and their boring old doings in the world, it seems to do so in a way designed to maximise a kind of collective emotional wash of togetherness, while (and by the way of) eliminating any element or notion that might strike a note of discord and disturb the major-chord harmony of the whole. As John Lahr argued in *New Society* (3 January 1986), there seems now to be no fervour in the theatrical market-place, only 'an enervating frivolity', expressing the spirit of a society 'winded, demoralised and afraid'.

It is this, of course, which leads a playwright like Howard Barker specifically to reject the possibility of a genuine communality in the theatre, insisting that 'we must overcome the urge to do things in unison' on the grounds that 'the baying of the audience in pursuit of unity is a sound of despair' (*Guardian*, 10 February 1986). But against Barker's call for the reassertion of the tragic principle in theatre – a form which he acknowledges is and will remain a minority, indeed élitist interest – a popular playwright like John McGrath would reassert the old '60s principle of theatre based round the real and palpable solidarities of class.² McGrath is a highly committed playmaker who has made considerable personal sacrifices in career terms in order to pursue the creation of a mass, popular audience for socialist theatre. The fact that he hasn't succeeded in urban England is not for want of trying. Nor is it due in large part – though I suspect it makes a contribution – to the delusion that complexity and ambiguity in the theatre are part of a wicked capitalist plot, masterminded by the running dogs of the Royal Court Theatre, to deflect the proletariat from its true class interests, instead of being the ways in which most people experience most of their lives most of the time. (I do think, however, that it's highly dangerous to argue that left-wing playmakers shouldn't honestly confront the undoubted crisis that socialism is facing in case some non-socialist might overhear and snitch on them.)

But the real problem with John McGrath's project – and we've crossed pens on this before – is the notion that there is a genuine, rooted popular culture out there, and that if you take variety, club entertainment, and panto and inject them with socialist content, then you've somehow set up a bridgehead in popular cultural space, you've become part of a lived tradition which enables you to place workers' contemporary experience within the context of their history. Well, I'm sorry, but I still don't buy it. The forms that have survived the onslaught of television – including poor old panto – have been so extensively

corrupted by that televisual culture that they no longer have any usable relationship with autochthonous folk forms at all. How could it be otherwise? As we know, the dramatic Making of the English Working Class depended on the equally conclusive Unmaking of the English Peasantry. The massiveness of the depopulation of the countryside, the extraordinary privations of early industrial life, the conscious and considerable efforts of the manufacturers to suppress ancient festivities in the interests of labour discipline – these effectively wiped out the living memory of ancient forms. Everywhere there is rupture, and even in the countryside the folk song, the morris dance and the mummers' play are not remembered but reclaimed, an act of social archaeology. And let's not delude ourselves either that even in the most militant pit villages – where if there were a living industrial tradition you'd expect to find it – the ballad, the brass band, or even the lodge library or billiard room are central elements in people's lives today.

* * *

It's in this context that we have to ask what contribution our medium can make to the struggles against our mean, greedy and increasingly frightening times; times inhabited and indeed in many ways defined by the most painful and often genuinely horrifying contradictions between human behaviour as we would will it – and sometimes glimpse it – and the actuality of much human action as it in fact is. In the spring of 1985, as the fire at the Bradford football stadium took hold, supporters of the opposing team stood in front of the stand chanting 'Burn, burn, burn'. After the tragedy of Heysel stadium, in which thirty-eight people, most of them Italians, were crushed to death by British football fans, supporters of the Florence team ran through the streets of that city shouting 'Viva Liverpool'. But still, and at the same time, in Bradford, acts of extraordinary heroism were being performed, as ordinary civilians ran into the burning stand to rescue the trapped, came out with their hair burning, and went back in again to rescue more. And although there were undoubtedly acts of gratuitous viciousness during the 1984-5 miners' strike, on all sides against all others, nobody involved in any way with that struggle could avoid being heartened and moved by the constant acts of bravery, by the consideration and kindness shown by people suffering the most extreme privation, to their comrades and to the strangers who supported them.

Similarly, but on the level of day-to-day experience, anyone who lives and/or works in a city will have felt not just the contradiction between but the cohabitation of the cruel and the creative, the squalid and the stylish, a vital culture of resistance breeding on the grey fungus of despair. This can be sensed in the hinterland around many city centres, where the gay bar or club is next door to the surviving workshop or

wholesale supplier; where the community resource centre has set up shop beside the left-wing bookshop in the middle of de facto India or China-town. And, as Wolverhampton sociologist Paul Willis trenchantly argues, you can see it in the city centre shopping precinct, where the highly visible young unemployed, attracted to 'these bright and active places' but unable to participate in their main and ostensibly only purpose, threaten but also challenge the meaning of the public space, demanding by their very presence that 'public centres, the gathering grounds of people, could be organised on more human and open lines' (Paul Willis, *New Society*, 5 April 1984).

And I've spent much time thinking about what kind of play might best treat of these contradictions, or even more, might seek to *inhabit* them, and the places where they grow. And I was sure it wouldn't be agit-prop, which can only present models of the world, and even then (frankly) not very sophisticated ones; nor naturalism, which can only treat of the personal; nor even social-realism, with its precise choice of acceptably 'typical' characters, carefully positioned in 'total' contexts, a form which for me had grown too dry, too rational, in some ways too abstract, to grapple with the stories of our times. I knew, in short, entirely what sort of play *wouldn't* do. I remained unsure about what kind of play *would* do until I realised that quite unintentionally I was already writing one.

* * *

The director and writer Ann Jellicoe is best known for her play *The Knack*, and for her tenure as literary manager of the Royal Court in one of its more heroic periods. In the '70s she moved to Lyme Regis in Dorset, and about nine years ago began to develop in her region a method of playmaking in which local stories were told by local people, but written, directed and designed by professionals. In 1984, I was asked to do Community Play No. 10, in the county town of Dorchester. The tale we hit upon was that of a titanic if historically doubtful contest of wills between a crusading local vicar (the original of the Rev Clare in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*) and the (female) founder of the local brewery. The piece had a cast of 180 and featured a race meeting, a Grand Equestrian Parade (in support of our brave lads at Balaclava), and a major cholera outbreak. Considering how to make these sequences, I raised with Ann the possibility of setting up defined groups of people to work on the individual episodes, in the manner of the medieval guilds making the mystery plays. Ann was hostile to the idea, which initially surprised me, but I soon understood why. We were, she explained, making not a pageant but a play, a thing of breadth, bulk and shape, to which all participants should have an equal relationship. But while the distinction between a play and a pageant seemed to be

apposite, it struck me that if *Entertaining Strangers* is a play, then it's an odd one. It's written to be performed, for a start, in the promenade manner, on platforms surrounding and in the midst of the audience; further, its action is often multi-focused, with several incidents occurring at once, albeit usually in the context of one event. Certainly, I thought, there should at least be a metaphorical definition that could embrace these peculiarities. And it didn't take me too much time – though I suspect it would have taken a more assiduous reader of the works of Mikhail Bakhtin even less – to realise that my play is a kind of theatrical carnival. And in rewriting the play for production last year at the National Theatre – a project minutely informed by a belated but painstaking reading of *Rabelais and His World* – I have increased and I hope deepened its carnivalesque character.

Earlier I argued that – to a greater extent than in most European countries – our dynastic links to the folk-festive past have been ruptured. We should, of course, feel highly impoverished, if not a little ashamed, as we contemplate the continued richness of the ancient folk traditions of Japan or Burma, or even Hungary or Spain. But we can at least comfort ourselves with the thought that our cosmopolitan rootlessness affords us an opportunity denied more settled nations: if there are few living links with our own ancient folk-forms, then the world is our oyster. We can draw on the forms of medieval Italy, or indeed Renaissance France; we can plunder eastern Europe and ravage the Orient. And we can look as well to those forms which we have ourselves imported to our shores. For you can question whether the folk ballad still lives, or argue about panto, or debate 'Whither Mummings?'; but there's surely no doubt that the biggest working-class cultural manifestation in Britain, now, and perhaps for 200 years, is the Notting Hill Carnival. And the fact that it has formed the paradigm for similar events up and down the country demonstrates that here at least is a tradition which doesn't need a preservation order slapped on it to survive.

For the maker of *theatrical* carnivals, the real carnival to be witnessed yearly along and about Ladbroke Grove provides a number of important clues. The first is the way that, unlike more conventional forms of even outdoor entertainment and festivity, carnival collapses the division between participant and spectator. Even Goethe, in his teutonically dour and disapproving description of the Roman carnival he witnessed in 1787,³ notes that the carnival reveller is both spectator and actor, and he finds it hard to stop himself being caught up, if only for an instant, with the intoxication of the experience. The reason for this is partly a matter of location: as Kwesi Owusu points out in his study of *The Struggle for Black Arts in Britain*,⁴ western art has traditionally sought to create illusory spaces – from the museum to the concert hall to the playhouse – where the division between the spectator and the work is

the very essence of the architecture. The site of carnival is in real space, in the actual social landscape, where the act of stepping off the pavement into the street transforms a spectator on the sidelines into a part of the action. And this flexibility is bound up with the second important characteristic of carnival, which is that despite its overall coherence, its structure can accommodate and embrace all variety of manifestations at every level of development and sophistication: the most elaborate costumes are cheek by jowl with makeshift cardboard masks; the most elegant street orchestra (or the most effectively amplified reggae band) competes with the solo fiddler on the toy violin or the child on the kazoo.

In this respect, the participatory, unfinished, multi-dimensional carnival is at absolute odds with the prepared, completed, uni-dimensional pageant, a distinction easily demonstrated by comparing two of the popular, mass-festive forms of our time. At a royal wedding, although the pavements are thronged, and much is going on, the division between coached participant and pedestrian spectator is clear and unambiguous. Even when observation takes autonomous form, it is one that fits effortlessly into a preconceived formation: the jolly cockneys at their street party, the Hooray Henries and Fionas at their Fortnum picnics, the funny foreigners with their backpacks and their instamatics, all click neatly into their pre-ordained position in the jigsaw. How different, however, is that more recent invention, the mass participation sports event, the London Marathon, or Sport Aid. Here the distinction between participant and spectator is often highly blurred, the motivations of the former are highly contradictory and sometimes antagonistic, and – as hapless television interviewers so frequently discover – it's often hard to tell the fun-runner from the record-challenger, as the perfectly equipped athlete in the tasteful Adidas strip is exposed as a dilettante, while the obviously frivolous young lady in charity T-shirt, whiteface make-up, and huge plastic ears plods doggedly towards her personal best. At the wedding, everything is exactly what it seems, and if it isn't, the cameras turn briskly away. At the marathon, by contrast, who knows what secret dreams, what challenges, and what ambitions lurk beneath the cheery waves, the gritted smiles, the elaborate disguises?

Almost every commentator on carnival has commented on forms of this ambivalence and mystery. In Rome, Goethe noted the constant and sometimes threatening confusion of the actual and the fantastical, as attorneys proceed up and down the Corso accusing people of the most extensive criminal activities, or young men set up brawls which go quickly and wildly out of control. Almost everybody too has noted how the event challenges and up-ends the social hierarchy. As Henry Porter pointed out in a commentary on the 1975 Venice Carnival (*Sunday Times*, 24 February 1985), it's no coincidence that socialist

administrations have been keen to revive this manifestation of levelling in action. An incident described by Porter – in which two revellers, dressed respectively as Napoleon and Marie Antoinette, march into a bar, jump the queue, and demand brandy and cake – could have occurred, in some form or another, at any carnival at any time anywhere in the world.

Just as common, and much more significant, is a ritual witnessed by Goethe, in which a dozen pulcinelle elect a king, crown him, put a sceptre in his hand, seat him in a decorated carriage, and accompany him along the street with music and loud cheers. For the carnival is a feast of fools, a period of limited duration when hierarchy is not challenged but up-ended, a reversal with which Bakhtin was obsessed and which is exemplified by the election of the King-for-a-Day, the Abbot of Unreason, the Lord of Misrule. When Falstaff plays the King to Hal in *Henry IV Part 1*, he represents an echo of this tradition. It is worth noting, however, that Shakespeare's benign view of this indulgence does not last throughout his career: by the time he reaches the last plays his vision has grown crusty. First, it is true, the paternal old eye twinkles at the charming naïveté of the *Winter's Tale* clowns, aping the quality in their absurdly fine new clothes. But then his gaze turns waspish, as it lights upon the distressing spectacle of Caliban. It has been the custom of the aged and secure throughout the ages to see in carnival revelling the threat of a debased and debasing culture, the march of the mindless, anarchy amok. Recently, the image of Caliban has been wheeled out once again, by the Cassandras of the *Spectator* and the *Daily Telegraph*, demanding that the latter-day descendants of Sycorax be 'driven back into their caves', or whatever it is Auberon Waugh thinks that people outside rural Somerset live in. It's true that carnivals can turn nasty, from Professor le roy Ladurie's *Carnival at Romans* to Notting Hill in 1976; but it's equally true that they tend to do so not of their own accord but when they are attacked, by those who have good reason to view them as a threat.

* * *

I am aware that Bakhtin's prescient work on carnival has been exploited primarily as a political paradigm. For the moment, however, I want to express some tentative thoughts about how the principles of carnival might work artistically, not in the real world of the street but in the illusory space of the theatre. In his remarkable book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, the Latin American theatre-maker Augusto Boal contrasts three dramaturgies: the Aristotelian model, in which the spectator passively delegates power to the dramatic character, so that the latter may act and think for him; the Brechtian theatre of the enlightened vanguard, in which the spectator does not delegate his or her power to

think, but still gives up the right to act; and Boal's own 'poetics of the oppressed', in which the spectator no longer delegates either power to the character, but exercises them both.⁵ In Boal's case, this is partly a literal matter, as he has developed an extensive repertoire of theatre games in which situations are presented by actors to groups who in turn instruct the actors to try out new ways of solving the social/political problems portrayed, before their very eyes. But he has also developed an abstracted, theatrical version of the same idea, what he calls the joker technique, whereby a character (or rather a character function) outside the space and time of the play acts as a 'contemporary and neighbour of the spectator', and interpreter of the action, a challenger, on the audience's behalf, of its course and outcome.

The jester is, of course, again, the Lord of Misrule, as is Dario Fo in his *fête* retrieval of the medieval strolling story-teller tradition, *Mistero-Buffo*.⁶ In Britain, too, there are contemporary *guillari* plying their trade. In the early '70s, carnival was a key element in the justly famous Bradford festivals, in both of which a genuine sense of popular street festivity was created by events as disparate as a full-scale mock-up of an American presidential election parade, the re-creation of an Edwardian steam-fair amid the disused arches of the abandoned railway station, and the celebration of a custom-built pagan child's naming ceremony, carried out by the Welfare State performance group (accompanied as I remember by the Mike Westbrook band, a fire-eater, and two live goats) beneath the venerable wood beams of the Wool Exchange. Recently I journeyed to Cumbria to visit the Welfare State at their present headquarters – as they put it, half-way between Wordsworth and Windscale. It was alarming as well as exciting to realise that the spotty teenager grinning bravely through her chickenpox in the corner of director John Fox's living-room was the very child whom I'd participated in naming in the Bradford Wool Exchange some fifteen years before. But it was unambiguously cheering to learn that Welfare State were still at it, in ways that bear much relevance to the above. Indeed, one of their more recent creations was an extraordinary compound of community event, pageant, fun-fair, and performance, presented on the wharves and in and on the Thames of old dockland, and titled *The Raising of the Titanic*.

It's my belief, however, that it's possible to go even further than the Welfare State. As I said at the beginning, the early '70s saw a split between the anarcho-libertarians and the stern class warriors or, in theatrical terms, between performance groups like Welfare State, based in the art colleges, and the lynx-eyed social realists from the universities. And despite sterling lyrical work by such as Adrian Mitchell, it seems to me that the one thing Welfare State haven't cracked about total theatre is the place of the text. Is there in the method of *abstraction* of the principles of carnival a way of incorporating the sophistication and

complexity of the fully realised theatrical text with the energy and immediacy of the participatory celebration?

One of the remarkable things about proto-carnival theatre as I experienced it in St Mary's Church, Dorchester, is its amazing flexibility. Somehow, because in the promenade form the audience is able to choose what to look at, to construct its own spatial relationship with the event, it is able to switch not just the direction but the very *mode* of its attention, if not in the twinkling of an eye, then certainly in the turn of a head. Perhaps I shouldn't have been so surprised. It's the custom of theatrical snobs like myself to complain of the exponentially diminishing concentration span of the television remote-control generation, but to forget the upside of that phenomenon, which is an extraordinary quickness of uptake, a learned capacity to click into highly contrasted narratives and moods at a moment's notice. Most of us have had the sense, watching even quite modern realist plays (and certainly Ibsen), that the audience is way ahead of the exposition, that while the plot's still en route the punters have already arrived. In *Entertaining Strangers*, the audience evinced a remarkable capacity to switch its attention and its mode of perception from a race meeting to a church, from a participatory drinking song to the witness of a silent man at prayer.

In this form, the theatre does seem to be more capable than we might have thought of presenting experience with a variance, a simultaneity, most of all an *unevenness*, which is metaphorically at least akin to the experience of actual carnival in real streets. My interest in exploiting such characteristics arises out of one of the central projects of Bakhtin's book. This was to contrast the official, religious world of Gothic Europe, in which everything is vertical, complete, and hierarchical, with the horizontal, unfinished world of carnival, of which the paradigm is the human body itself, and particularly the lower half of it, with its tumescent protuberances and welcoming hollows, its permanent condition of ingestion and evacuation, the simultaneous site of birth and death. Bakhtin goes on to relate this characteristic to another traditional function of the ancient feast of fools, which is to evoke the ritual of the dying and reborn king, the ritual echoed dimly in our own mummies' plays. For Bakhtin, Rabelais's carnival form is uniquely capable of expressing birth and death, good and evil, the elegiac and the grotesque, the transcendent and the base, not as separate or opposite, but as the simultaneous inhabitants of the same processional space – as the sacred and profane were able, in the flash of an eye, to occupy the same space during our performances in Dorchester. In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin writes:

all that exists dies and is born simultaneously, combines the past and the future, the obsolete and the youthful, the old truth and the new

truth. However small the part of the existing world we have chosen we shall find in it the same fusion. And this fusion is deeply dynamic: all that exists, both in the whole and in each of its parts, is in the act of becoming.⁷

I've already made clear that it is this capacity to express the opposite in the same plane that is, for me, the most exciting aspect of carnival as Bakhtin defines it. Certainly, that idea is central to the project of developing a theatre that can explore and inhabit the contradictions of our time without either denying their existence or pouring detached scorn on all sides from a great height. It also contains within it the answer to those critics of carnival – both in the abstract and in the theatre – who point to the frequent historical *incorporation* of carnival, an incorporation acknowledged by Bakhtin himself (who describes how even in the Renaissance 'the state encroached upon festive life and turned it into a parade'). That this containment often takes the form of a safety-valve for otherwise explosive social tensions is argued by Terry Eagleton, who describes carnival as 'a *licensed* affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art'.⁸ One hardly dare speculate as to the level of ineffectiveness that Eagleton would ascribe to the carnivalesque *in artistic form* (revolutionary or otherwise), but it is pretty clear that he would agree wholeheartedly with Howard Barker that 'a carnival is not a revolution', because 'after the carnival, after the removal of the masks, you are precisely who you were before'. And perhaps the most compelling reasons for that phenomenon lie in the essentially limited nature of carnival, its characteristic as an unpeeling of existing hierarchies (and its consequent dependence on them the right way up), and most of all its formal conservatism, its backwardness, its visible roots in ancient and venerable – if peasant – traditions. No surprise then, as Allon White and Peter Stallybrass point out, that the most successful attempts to apply Bakhtin to the present day 'focus upon cultures which still have a strong repertoire of carnivalesque practices, such as Latin America, or upon literatures produced in a colonial or neo-colonial context where the political difference between the dominant and subordinate culture is particularly charged'.⁹

It is perhaps in the last sentence that the clue lies. For while the political difference between Hampstead and Haringey in London may not yet be comparable with that between *riviera Rio* and the *barrios*, there is no question that it has got considerably *more* charged over recent years, that the sense of living beneath the base of a dominant and irremovable authoritarian hierarchy has increased dramatically and will go on doing so. And, as Paul Gilroy has recently argued, the fact that some inner-city cultural forms are rooted in tradition, that they express

a limited sense of security in an otherwise frightening and threatening world, does not necessarily mean that their expression and most importantly *their defence* is not a potentially radical act.¹⁰

In the inner city, it seems to me, we do find communities peculiarly receptive to the principles of carnival, even in theatrical form. One of the assumptions about community theatre on the Ann Jellicoe model was that it relied on the existence of a culturally homogeneous grouping – such as you would be more likely to find surrounding a school in south Dorset than in Walsall or north London. But the fact that there have been highly successful urban community plays in Pleck, Finsbury Park, and elsewhere, many of them involving groups drawn from the widest possible class and ethnic spectra, demonstrates a perhaps unexpected potential for carnivalesque theatre in the urban environment. But it really should be no surprise. The inner city contains within it the building blocks of a rich alliance between the economically and the socially excluded – an alliance which has already borne fruit in the obvious realms of music (the influence of black culture on white working-class music) and fashion (the spread not just of sartorial styles but of a whole attitude to clothing and personal presentation first developed in and by the gay communities). It has also found expression in the alliances that developed between the city and the industrial countryside during the miners' strike, a dispute which was itself, as has been frequently argued, in part a conservative movement in defence of communities and their traditions, but also, as things fell out, a conflict which brought the new politics and cultures of the cities into the coalfields, as well as vice versa.

Finally, however, the receptiveness of the city to the carnivalesque lies in its *prefigurative* quality. Augusto Boal describes his theatre in Sao Paulo as a rehearsal for the revolution, and while that word left my active vocabulary some time ago, I relate very strongly to the idea that the theatre is not just about what is but also what could be. During medieval carnival, as Bakhtin reminds us, 'for a short time life came out of its usual, legalised and consecrated furrows and entered into the space of utopian freedom. The very brevity of this freedom increased its fantastical nature and utopian radicalism.'¹¹

What I suppose most of us are striving for is a way of combining the cerebral, unearthly detachment of Brecht's theory with the all too earthy, sensual, visceral experience of Bakhtin's carnival, so that in alliance these two forces can finally defeat the puppeteers and manipulators of the spectacle. We are doing so in full knowledge of the dangers of incorporation, of becoming no more than a radical side-show to divert the masses and dampen their ardour. But, although Terry Eagleton is right to remind us of Shakespeare's perception that 'there is no slander in an allowed fool',¹² there remain fools, in the bard's canon and elsewhere, whose message of energy and anarchy is by no means welcome at the

feast, and would be even less so if informed by the passion and intelligence of those whose analysis of social wrongs is informed by a greater breadth of experience and thought. When that old manipulator Prospero came to the island, he seized it from Sycorax, releasing her slave Ariel, but then enchaining him again, to enchant his creatures with his spells and songs. Now that Ariel is free, perhaps the time has come for him to look down from his flight, and for Sycorax's slave-son Caliban to crawl up from the bowels of the earth, for them to take each other's hands, and show us what a future island, without Sycorax or Prospero, what such an island might be like.

References

- 1 'Festivals of the oppressed' was first delivered as the George Orwell Memorial Lecture on 6 November 1986. It was subsequently given as a talk at the National Theatre on 1 June 1987. David Edgar's comedy *That Summer* was presented at the Hampstead Theatre in London from July 1987; and a new version of the Dorset carnival-play *Entertaining Strangers*, directed by Peter Hall, was presented at the National Theatre's Cottesloe from October 1987.
- 2 See John McGrath, *A Good Night Out* (London, 1981).
- 3 J.W. von Goethe, *Italian Journey*, translated by W.H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 446-70.
- 4 Kwesi Owusu, *The Struggle for Black Arts in Britain* (London, 1986).
- 5 Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London, 1979).
- 6 See Tony Mitchell, *Dario Fo: people's court jester* (London, 1984).
- 7 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1968), p. 416.
- 8 Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or, Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London, 1981), p. 148.
- 9 Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London, 1986), p. 11.
- 10 Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London, 1987).
- 11 Bakhtin, op. cit., p. 89.
- 12 Eagleton, op. cit., p. 148.

China and Anglo-China Poems

by Arthur Clegg

illustrations by Jan Flavell



'He believed in a classless society
he believed it in his bones
as peasants do
as workers do
as one who has marched
ten thousand li'

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Notes and documents

Gaza: 'This is no rebellion – it is a war'*

The day on which former Defence minister Sharon dedicated his new house in the Moslem quarter of the old city of Jerusalem, the Ha'ir correspondent, Makhram Khury Makhul, went to Gaza to hear the local inhabitants' version of the latest events. Here he describes what happened, including being wounded in the face and meeting one of the leaders of the 'riots'.

A long story, the end of which is not seen. It began when I waited in Jaffa at the station for Gaza taxis. Not one taxi arrived for a whole hour. One taxi-driver from Gaza who was stuck in Jaffa was reluctant to agree to take me. He was still hesitant when we were on the way: 'I am not sure that I should drive back to Gaza today. We all know one rule: if the Israeli radio in Arabic says that the situation is calm, it means the opposite is true.'

Shortly after 9am I got out of the taxi at Beit Hanun (in the Gaza Strip) – I still had more than an hour before meeting the leader in Gaza. The streets were empty. Several minutes later I saw three military jeeps by the side of the road and not far from them stood more than ten soldiers who were firing into one of the side-streets. I kept walking towards Gaza, overtook the soldiers, and found myself in no-man's land. From one side hundreds of demonstrators were approaching, throwing Molotov Cocktails and stones. From behind me the Israeli soldiers were shooting at the demonstrators. I saw the soldiers shooting straight ahead. I could hear the whistle of the bullets. Before I had time to think how I would get out of there, I was covered with blood. I didn't feel pain. It was as if someone had poured a bottle of blood over

*Translated by Israel Shahak from *Ha'ir* (18 December 1987).

my head. I took a red and white Kaffiya out of my bag and bandaged my head. In the meanwhile, I had moved away from the centre of confrontation. A taxi passing by took me to the el-Shifa hospital in Gaza. All along the way I could hear the shooting.

At the hospital entrance stood some 300 Palestinian physicians in white coats, waiting for the wounded to arrive. I was the first case for the day. They took me into the operating room and ten physicians began to take care of me, all together. One took my blood pressure, the other took my temperature, a third examined my stomach, while a fourth was connecting me to the ECG machine. I had been hit in the face. While they were stitching the wound under local anaesthetic, a 17-year-old boy was brought in shot by the soldiers in the confrontation at Beit Hanun. From the bed I could see in the mirror a rifle moving nervously outside the window. The boy died during the operation,* lying next to me.

From the operating room I went straight into the hospital yard. Seven Israeli soldiers were standing there arresting the youngsters who had come to see their wounded friend. I decided to try and make it to the meeting in spite of what had happened. At the rendez-vous I was met by another man who took me to see the leader.

The condition for the meeting was that I would not know his name nor any other identifying information. Later on, I saw him in action, giving orders, receiving new information, leading thousands of people against the army. Twice I saw the Israeli soldiers withdrawing. He speaks perfect literary Arabic and good Hebrew. He speaks openly, sharply, with much information and figures. Every thirty minutes he receives an updated report from his men on what is happening in the Gaza Strip. I saw five men around him who kept passing reports to him. During the day I spent with him we were at several points in Gaza and the refugee camps of Jabaliya and Shatti. He always stood straight up, hardly moving. Everywhere people came to him, as if drawn to him. I spoke to him while we were walking through the narrow streets.

The Arabs of Gaza who saw me with him asked what was I doing there. They are used to journalists, Israelis and non-Israelis, who sit at the Army headquarters, or move around protected by twenty jeeps, taking a few pictures and leaving. On this matter the leader said: 'We gave orders to our men not to believe the signs of foreign press, because behind them stand the settlers, the occupation soldiers, in order to penetrate Gaza in this way.' Nevertheless, he also said: 'The progressive Jewish journalists are the most reasonable and the best in Israel.'

The bandage on my face helped to break down some of the suspicion. As far as I could judge he was free and sincere when he spoke with me.

*There is a confusion in the article between this boy — who, though gravely wounded, did not, in fact, die — and a boy who had died previously.

'These are not really demonstrations, and this is no rebellion', the leader said, adding his definition to the discussion in Israel. 'This is a war which goes on for twenty four hours a day. We work in rotation, day and night. The order was for the youngsters to face the fire, and they don't hesitate to do so, they block the main path of the Army. This is the first time in history that this is happening. I move around the Strip and give directions in the camps. It is not only children, it includes everyone, all ages. Here is a woman, 55 years old, who participated in the events and was beaten by the soldiers with clubs. They won't be deterred. Ninety per cent of the people in Gaza belong to political streams. They don't need directions from anyone. And anyone who lives under occupation and repression does not need someone to incite him.'

'How are you organising the demonstrations today?' I asked. 'Once, in order to start a demonstration, we used to send children. Now they all go out by themselves on to the street, from 3am. And we are talking about hundreds. We have no timetable. We have waves of demonstrators at 3am in the morning, at noon and at early evening, then we sleep and organise. Sometimes, when it is necessary, we also go out at 10pm, because at night the Army has no control over the streets and they don't know the streets too well, so then we rule. For example, yesterday at the Jabaliya refugee camp there were demonstrators all night long and there were no soldiers, in spite of the curfew. The soldiers simply ran away, because thousands of people were out there creating a human moving wall, and against that no iron fist and shooting can stand.'

'Are you not afraid?' 'We mustn't be afraid of anything. The occupation authorities think that if someone dies and they take the body and permit the burial to take place only at night, then they will be able to prevent disturbances. But we have already gone beyond that. The new system is that we kidnap the bodies from the hospital and bury them and thus cause a spontaneous demonstration. We have forbidden the physicians to transfer the bodies to the Army, and in any case, they don't control the situation because it is no problem for us to kidnap the bodies. For example, during the past few days we have kidnapped four bodies and held funerals at night which turned into demonstrations, and then the whole region – for example, Khan Yunis yesterday – comes out on the streets. No one remains at home. 35,000 people participated in that funeral. During it we hit seven soldiers. The day before yesterday I was at Rafah and El Berej. Tens of thousands were out there and until 3am the Army, with all its forces, could not break in. Fifty metres separated the Army from the Gazans who kept the first ranks, and the Army just didn't dare come in.'

On a side-street someone comes up to him and tells him that a 17-year-old boy has just been murdered at Beit Hanun. That was the boy who died an hour before in the hospital next to me. The leader was receiving reports all the time, very detailed ones, how everyone was

beaten, with a club or otherwise, in what part of the body and where it happened. He tells me that it is forbidden to spread leaflets in the name of any political organisation, but if he had wanted to he could have easily supplied a daily leaflet. 'We know how to recognise their intelligence men. We feel their presence, especially in the mornings. We have managed to make sure that the Israeli authorities cannot recognise the inciters. They shall not see one more inciter. An order is given and everyone is out, strongly and resolutely. There are no individual inciters.'

When I ask him about the role of the leader in leading the masses, he tries to sound modest: 'It is not exactly a leader, it is someone who gives orders.' But in the hours I spend with him I can see that his orders are followed almost religiously. He describes the situation as follows: 'Out of a population of 650,000 in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli authorities have arrested 47,000 so far. Each of them is already a leader where he lives. The detention turns them into leaders. We cause the politicisation of the people, and they enjoy it because they need it. There is no need to believe that some external forces are leading this. The people belong to various organisations here which are some sort of political parties of the future state. And even those who do not belong to any body identify with the general struggle.'

During the years which have passed, the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip have developed a subtle bitterness towards their Palestinian brothers in the West Bank. They feel neglected, even forgotten. The journalists who report on the occupied territories usually go out from Jerusalem. They can easily reach Ramallah or Bethlehem, but hardly ever get to Gaza. So, naturally, it is the West Bank which gets the headlines. Even when far more important things happen in Gaza, they hardly receive press coverage.

Loyalty to the so-called Palestinian unity prevents the people of Gaza from expressing their frustration, but many of them feel that the national leadership in the West Bank looks down on them, in the way town people look down on the inhabitants of a remote province. All that the leader is prepared to say is: 'Once the people of Gaza decide to do something, they go all the way. The West Bank is paradise compared to Gaza. The inhabitants of the Gaza Strip don't even have such a simple but important thing as a passport. Most of them only have refugee papers.'

Maybe this is the reason why the Gaza Strip has always been known for independent activity. In the late 1960s underground groups used to operate under the umbrella cover of the Palestinian organisations, but even if they made contact with the leadership abroad, it was difficult to maintain it. The decision to operate was made in the Gaza Strip and the people usually obtained arms and explosives on their own. In recent years they have been careful in the differentiation between the armed groups and activists who are considered 'political' – in no case have

arms been used in the demonstrations against the Army: the use of arms could lead to a blood bath.

It is the local leaders who observe this discipline. 'Each neighbourhood has its own known leader, who is usually a prominent figure. He is known for his high political awareness. He does not have to do much persuasion since the situation helps him. All he has to do is give the sign. In a large area there will be two or three leaders. The people who are arrested are usually political people who belong to some ideological line, not necessarily to a certain organisation. The leader builds around him an organised mass which can go out at any given moment and do what has to be done. In fact, we want the Israeli Army. We will not demonstrate when the Army is not there. We want the Army in order to have a confrontation in some way.'

Concerning the efficiency of the organisation, he says: '500 women went out yesterday to Beit Hanun; they knew about the action only five minutes before they left. The way the masses are mobilised is like a military operation. We have the experience that when we want to operate all over the Gaza Strip, we can block the main roads within moments. When the Army reports that they have opened the main road leading from the Strip, they are lying because the road is blocked by us.'

He emphasises: 'It is not true that the mosques are centres of the incitement. We use the loudspeakers in the mosques, but no more. Now everyone is united in one front. At the moment it matters not who the organisations are, in spite of the fact that it is well known that the Popular Front is more revolutionary than the Fatah. Basically, both are present, though numerically there are more belonging to Fatah.'

Suddenly, he has disappeared. I have no idea where he has gone. He didn't even say goodbye. An hour later I see him at the Shifa hospital, where his forces have been under siege for five hours. Shortly after 11, I reach the Red Cross building where, since the morning, 200 lawyers have been staying. At 11.45 they decide to go out in a peaceful march towards the hospital, which had been filled with wounded people during the past few hours. A strange march through the streets of Gaza – many older men with white hair, dozens of men wearing suits and ties and shined shoes, quietly marching among the burning tyres. At the hospital yard they are received by the leader. 'Loosen up your ties and merge in with the others', he tells them. Some of the older lawyers feel insulted. Five minutes later they are all busy throwing stones at the soldiers who surround the area.

Next to the hospital there is a small mosque. The leader goes in, stations several guards at the door and takes over the loudspeakers and gathers his men. The news about the death of the boy from Beit Hanun spreads and hundreds of people move in the direction of the hospital. Within an hour thirteen people wounded by shots arrive at the hospital. Among them I see a girl shot in the bottom and a young man with an

arm wound – two holes, where the bullet entered and where it went out. The hospital is filled with thousands of people. Many of them are seeking cover from the shooting in the streets, believing that the Army would not enter the hospital. It is difficult to walk in the corridors. I hear shooting again, closer this time, very close. The leader begins sending out his people, first the young ones, then the older men, and behind them the women. The leader gives them orders to pass on the stones from the back to the front. They get organised in a line and a rain of stones is thrown. After each lot of stones the leader gives the order: 'All back in!'

The soldiers begin shooting at a young man standing on the roof of the eastern building. He jumps into the yard in an attempt to escape them. Several soldiers enter the hospital area. The young man tries to escape, then sees a soldier in front of him. He stops running, faces the soldier, opens his shirt, exposes his chest and says, 'Shoot.' The soldier aims his rifle at a distance of fifteen metres and shoots.

It happened in front of my own eyes, less than twenty metres from me. I shall never forget the face of the soldier. I heard people shouting, 'Wounded, wounded.' The shooting went on. The leader shouted, 'All the women out to the wounded man.' They went out and brought the body in and the doctors put it on a stretcher. I went into the operating room. The physician told me that the bullet had cut the main artery. Later on, when we heard that he had died, young men with their faces covered came in and took the body. The soldiers withdrew some 300 metres to Omar el Mukhtar street. Ten young men marched with the body and disappeared from my view within minutes.

With every wounded person or dead body hundreds more people came to the hospital. At the hospital they began preparing Molotov Cocktails. I saw a small boy picking up a bottle from the floor, taking out of his pocket a small plastic bottle with turpentine and a rag, closing the bottle, lighting a match and throwing. A fire began from the tyres thrown into the yard. The leader told me that, in addition to the Molotov Cocktails and stones, they have gone back to the ancient method – a stone and a sling, like David.

The soldiers who had got very close to the hospital were caught between the burning tyres and the hundreds of demonstrators who began to surround them. The soldiers tried to escape but the demonstrators managed to catch one of them. His friends escaped, all of them. The captured soldier was undressed. His coat, his bag, all his things were taken from him. They didn't touch him bodily and he was set free with only his torn pants on him. They could have killed him. They opened his bag, asking where were the handgrenades. Some of them began dancing with his ammunition in one hand and with the other making the 'V' sign. They all stepped over the coat and shirt of the soldier. When I asked them what they were celebrating, they replied, 'This is the greatest

humiliation of the occupation.’

After this victory the leader had a few moments for me. ‘It used to be difficult even to organise a strike’, he said. ‘Today, it is most easy. The Army opens the shops and they close. Rashed el-Shawa, who lost all his influence, says that the recent events are the expression of the people’s despair. But people who despair do not put up a struggle, they give up. In fact we have no arms, but even so, if things go on, we shall push the soldiers back not only as far as the Erez junction [the border of the Gaza Strip] but as far as Tel Aviv.’

I begin to be bothered by my wound. Several physicians run after me and offer some treatment. Another man is brought to the hospital wounded in the head. He dies shortly afterwards. His body is kidnaped. Soldiers enter the hospital yard once again. I hear shooting inside the building. People are blockading themselves in the building and several are wounded and there is no time to take care of them. The leader shouts to the women to go out and take care of the wounded people in spite of the danger. For every wounded man, there are twenty who hurry to give a blood donation. Within a very short time twenty-eight wounded people are brought in, three of them badly – one of them dies at 7pm. Dozens of physicians are working all the time, non-stop. Around noon a 10-year-old boy is shot dead in the yard in front of his mother. His body is covered with a green sheet from the hospital, decorated with two palm leaves and put on a wooden podium.

I climb up on to the roof. At 3.15pm the attack from above begins: a helicopter drops teargas, everyone begins coughing. If you don’t get the gas from below, you get it from above. I hear shots from the helicopter. I hear the Army loudspeaker announce that the hospital area is declared a closed military area. The area is surrounded from three sides, the iron gates are broken and forty-five minutes of shooting follow. Forty people are arrested, many are wounded. I see one man escaping dragging a wounded leg.

I feel like a live target. It is a good thing that my tape is working, I think. At least it will record how I get killed. In the meanwhile, some thirty jeeps enter the hospital area and I hear shooting from all sides. Wounded people jump over the fence and run into the nearby trees for cover. Others run into the narrow streets where it is difficult for the Army to go in. I hear shouts of people surrounded, being beaten with clubs. I enter a nearby house. I try phoning the Ministry of Defence, the Prime Minister’s office. All the phone lines are busy. I phone the Knesset and am told that no member of the Knesset is around – ‘They are somewhere here but I can’t get them.’ The telephonist then finds Tufik Zayad. ‘I shall raise the matter in the Knesset’, he tells me. I call the Red Cross and they say they will come. They never arrive. I examine my pulse: 120 per minute.

A demonstration of 1,000 people from the Shatti refugee camp

arrives at the hospital. They had heard about the dead. I meet a physician in the street. He had already seen me wounded in the morning. He offers to take me to rest at his home and gives me some pain killers. There is another physician at his home. They both examine me and say that I may have a fractured chin. At 4pm a curfew is declared. It begins to get dark. The Army cuts off the electricity supply and the inhabitants light candles. In the Moslem quarter in Jerusalem, Sharon is lighting a Hanukka candle at his new home.

I climb up on to the roof of the house. All around people are gathering and tyres are on fire. The soldiers have disappeared. The people here say that darkness is the best weapon against the occupation. Thousands of people are in the streets. This is what a curfew looks like. I call my editorial office, trying to find a way out. Two local people look around and tell me that the main road is blocked. The physician says I can spend the night at his home. At 9pm the electricity is reconnected. 'Now the stone rules in the street', he warns me. 'It is dangerous to go out.' Still, I decide to go.

I walk through empty streets for a kilometre until I reach the police station. The gate is locked. The policemen aim their guns at me and only after examining my papers do they let me in. When a military vehicle arrives to get me out to the Erez junction, several policemen go up on the roof to make sure I will be safe on my short way to the car.

At the Erez junction, less than 10 kilometres from all these events, I see some sleepy reserve soldiers. They ask me what is happening at Gaza and how I got wounded. I tell them that I was invited as referee at a basketball game between the Hebron and Gaza teams. The crowd beat me, I tell them, and cursed the referee. One of the soldiers says that he also plays basketball and asks how were the Arabs in basketball and who won the game.

MAKRAM KHURY MAKHUL

UK commentary

Equal opportunities lost: the case of education

Education, housing and local government financing are at the centre of the Conservative government's reformation of the 'inner cities', Mrs Thatcher's priority for attention during her third term of office. Criticisms of the government's proposals to reform housing and education – in particular, their likely adverse effects on the most deprived urban residents – must, however, be seen in the wider context of structural changes taking place in urban society. The reality is that both central

and local government have failed to help the deprived and working-class communities in depressed areas. And apparently wealthy areas are afflicted with all the decay and demoralisation now associated with the urban environment. London, indeed, represents a microcosm of modern Britain, with its divisions on grounds of race and class and affluence.

The rot began for London in the early 1960s as people and industry were pushed out into the developing suburban areas, new towns and other regions of England. By the end of the 1970s, it was clear that companies (with their jobs) and much of the skilled population had fled from the capital. What was left, in greater proportions than ever before, were the elderly, the homeless, the sick and disabled, the unemployed and unemployable, single-parent households and young people. In addition, there were over 150 languages being spoken by the diverse multi-lingual and multi-racial community, there was racial harassment and discrimination, high crime and environmental dereliction and there were divided communities.

Political polarisation between Left and Right and between central and local government over the past decade has added to the lack of vision in the preceding decade and contributed to failed policies. In spite of the billions spent on urban renewal programmes, the levels of unemployment and poverty in the depressed parts of many urban areas continue to be excessive. Besides political polarisation, there are many more specific reasons for such a massive failure. These include programmes for local communities decided on in Whitehall rather than in communities themselves; local government paternalism in telling local people what was best for them rather than itself acting as an enabling force and resource and working with them; the plethora of government agencies (including the undemocratic bodies set up to encourage urban regeneration) operating in a strategy vacuum which led to confusion and conflict between social and economic goals; the continuous changing of rules for financing social and economic priorities set by government; the dissipation of community energies in challenging the wrongdoings of local and central government instead of rebuilding communities; and the present government's avowed aversion to public spending and commitment to the destruction of local government.

A major cause of the confrontation between local and central government has been the way in which some local authorities have attempted to alter radically the relationships between the local authority apparatus and the people. By the end of the 1970s it was clear that local government had failed to meet the increasing social and economic needs of its deprived communities. Socialist administrations drew up agendas which were totally different from that of Thatcher. On the one side, there was an open willingness to defend minorities and women against prejudice and discrimination, to support their demands for justice and

equality, to extend public spending programmes to meet educational, social and recreation needs and to provide training and support job creation. On the other, there was a new drive towards privatisation, cash limits and rate-capping to curtail public spending, efficiency and economy measures and encouragement for the individual and the enterprising.

Neither approach was totally wrong nor totally right. Socialist administrations often failed to address the issue of institutional restructuring and ignored the old infra-structure in local authorities which was (and still is) often corrupt, inefficient and ineffective in meeting local people's needs. Energies have been directed towards fighting the government and introducing new overlay programmes whilst leaving the main structure relatively unscathed.

The government has attacked local government (or those bits it doesn't like) as profligate, inefficient, political and irrelevant. In the process it has pushed on with its monetarist ethos and privatisation programme and shifted the emphasis away from social programmes. Reforms of housing and education will also direct these services more towards delivery through market forces. The government has also eliminated some opposition through legislation and abolition and has won the 'hearts and minds', through distorted media propaganda, of many ordinary people about the goodness of its policies for them (e.g., parental power, individual choice and the virtues of private enterprise).

There continues to be an increase in the needs of the deprived groups in society, groups who are also relatively powerless. They are the 'usually excluded' people – decisions are made either about them, for them, on their behalf or impact on them. The 'usually excluded' groups of people are increasing; collectively, they do not represent only 'minority interests'. The challenge is not so much whether they have legitimate needs which require overt political and social responses, but how to convince those that are better-off – as well as different interest groups among the deprived and excluded – that a political and social response to one section is not against the interests of any other, but is, in fact, in the best interests of all.

The moral content of policies and programmes and the determination to bring about change, with the intended beneficiaries fully involved, must be at the top of any socialist agenda. Yet this is the sort of agenda which the now abolished Greater London Council (GLC) to a large extent pursued. It failed, in part, because it was becoming too successful and so the government abolished it. In spite of an increasingly hostile climate, others have tried to replicate some of the policies and programmes adopted by the GLC. It is, therefore, important for local authorities and local communities to learn from the mistakes made through innovation so that they are not repeated. No one involved in the GLC experience would deny the excitement and enthusiasm that the

new policies and programmes generated; equally, no one would deny the failures.

With considerable resources at its disposal, the GLC was able to cushion somewhat the social and economic crisis in London by supporting the most vulnerable communities. A whole range of communities was identified with needs requiring particular responses. Women, Black and other ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, victims of crime and police lack of accountability, the elderly, the unemployed, the homeless, lesbians and gay men and young people were identified as intended beneficiaries of equal opportunities and community support programmes. But these programmes were additional to the mainstream, substantive activities of the GLC – ‘additionality’ and ‘by-passing’ were the by-words for the new policies and programmes. The new culturalist-dominated initiatives were not woven into the main structure of the organisation; instead, new ones were created. Race, women, police, industry, ethnic minorities and disabilities committees were created with support staff to guide the policies and programmes. Sometimes they influenced changes in existing mainstream programmes, but this influence was superficial and cosmetic. In reality, nothing changed. The mainstream institution was largely run by the bureaucrats and professionals who had always run it. It remained riddled with racism and sexism, even though on the surface there was a multi-ethnic veneer.

Local authorities seeking to introduce radical policies to shift resources in favour of disadvantaged groups in the inner cities have fallen into the trap of incremental marginalism. This means a few Black bureaucrats to liaise with the Blacks, a few disabled people to take on the needs of those with disabilities, a group of women to satisfy women’s needs, and so on. The hope was that they would change the customs and practices of a lifetime, break the institutional mould of discrimination and fundamentally alter the culture of the organisation.

No one can deny the importance and positive impact of these programmes at that time. In retrospect, however, such widely acclaimed innovations failed to achieve a radical transformation of the quality of life for deprived communities and, instead, raised expectations which remain unfulfilled. And, in doing so, elected members in the socialist authorities took the easy option when in power, by by-passing the main infrastructure and creating additional programmes for those communities instead of re-directing the existing mainstream resources. Yes, they showed the door to the most obstinate heads of departments, but then they only replaced them with near replicas of their predecessors. So it has proved very simple for the new structures to be dismantled. Thatcher’s measures to wipe out the influence of local government, which include cash limits, rate-capping and power-stripping legislation, have forced the socialist authorities to abandon their avowed commitment to equal opportunities and anti-racism.

Institutional racism cannot be eliminated without major surgery. If an institution is rotten to the core, as most institutions tend to be, it has to be disinfested and restructured, or rehabilitated or rebuilt completely.

The irony of Thatcher's reforms is that they will destroy some of the failed institutions and could provide the scope for local communities to build and control their own organisations and even institutions to meet their own self-perceived needs. But the reality is – as would be expected – that the government's replacements for local authorities are, in effect, a combination of private companies, undemocratic appointed bodies or quasi-statutory quangos and central government ministries with ministerial dictat and mandarins preserving the status quo. It is all the more imperative, then, that in fighting these measures local socialism should learn from its mistakes, so giving fresh impetus to local communities organising to influence their own destiny, rather than leaving it in the hands of those who arrogantly and contemptuously think they know what's good for the rest.

Education

The Black presence is at the heart of the inner-cities dilemma facing the government. How can it pretend to action to help such people achieve equality and justice when it is putting a renewed effort into making their lives a misery by introducing ever more unnecessary and inhumane immigration controls (and even it admits primary immigration ended years ago); by making less resources available for decent housing, thus forcing many Black families into homelessness; by trying to relax anti-discriminatory requirements on employers; by attempting to outlaw contract compliance aimed at making contractors meet their legal obligations with regard to equal employment opportunities, and by introducing more repressive measures of social control and policing? And now, added to all this, education has been marked out as suitable for Thatcher's type of radical reform. It, too, must compete to survive. The Education Reform Bill is a further measure designed to roll back the minimal gains made for Black and minority ethnic people, women, those with disabilities and working-class people in inner-city areas as a result of some positive and a few comprehensive anti-racist and anti-sexist policies and programmes.

In its efforts at rolling back anti-racism and anti-sexism, the government has been ably assisted by its propagandist allies, the tabloid press and other sections of the mass media. No opportunity is lost to sensationalise race or sex equality issues in those local education authorities (LEAs) pursuing anti-racism and anti-sexism. Blatant lies such as 'Baa Baa Green Sheep' stories, the horrors of being the single white in the 'all-Black' school (never a problem the other way round!), the reports of 'harassment' of any teacher accused of racist behaviour and

sensationalist coverage of any observance of non-Christian religious festivals held in schools and involving white children, abound.

It can be no surprise, therefore, that 1987 witnessed the Dewsbury affair, with white parents exercising their rights and entitlements to choose the school they wanted for their children. They argued that it was only coincidence and culture that the school they rejected happened to have a predominance of Asian children and the schools of their choice happened to be predominantly white. It was also coincidence that their leader was an active Conservative politician and their campaign drew support from the National Front and other known extremist groupings. The mass media played its part, claiming that standards were lower because of the Black presence. Yet again, this was a blatant lie to whip up fury and race hatred and roll back anti-racist programmes.

The government and its supporters continue to drive a wedge of division between the 'haves' and 'the have-nots' in the cities. Not surprisingly, some 40 per cent of whites favoured a school of their own race – as against only 15 per cent of Afro-Caribbeans and 19 per cent of Asians, according to a recent Harris poll for London Weekend Television. Interestingly, the poll appears to suggest that Black people, poor whites and linguistic minorities are most anxious to integrate in areas like inner London. There is, however, greater inclination towards segregation on religious grounds.

Although the racial composition of many of the major cities will in some parts be a main determinant of the race characteristics of local schools, it is the denominational schools which could lead the way to the creation of separate all-Black and all-white schools. The ability to opt out of LEA control, as proposed in the Education Reform Bill, will enable predominantly white schools to preserve their image. Currently, most all-white schools reject the notions of anti-racist and multicultural education as relevant for them – 'no problems here' is the typical response. Exercising their entitlement to choice will enable many white families to reject those schools with a high Black presence, whatever the level of achievement and quality of school. (Equality measures are often reported in the media as getting in the way of basic teaching).

Predominantly black schools, especially where there is a dominant religious group within a locality (e.g., Muslim), will also be pressing to go their own way and free themselves from the shackles of national curriculum and state direction. And there is a growing demand for all-Black schools, but this is largely because of the failings of the state-run schools to end education underachievement of Black children.

The government appears to be unconcerned about the prospect of segregated schools. On 13 November 1987, Baroness Hooper, Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science (DES) said on the BBC: 'If we are offering freedom of choice to parents, we must allow that choice to operate. If it ends up with a segregated system, then so be it.'

But getting things changed to make them fair and right for Black people entails also getting them right for everyone else, particularly poor whites. Anti-racism is feared by those in power not because it means just imposing changes to benefit Black people, but because it means fundamental changes for justice and equality, thus benefiting all. For those who presently control the institutions and want to preserve the status quo, it is easier to blame the Blacks. Keep them in the poorer schools, lump the poor whites in the same institutions, and then blame the Blacks not the system for the failure of the whites. The Black and anti-racist perspective can therefore provide a base-line for concerns over and opposition to the Education Reform Bill, which will have a similar relevance for all other groups of pupils and students who presently fail to get a fair outcome from the educational provisions available.

What, after all, is the reality of parental choice in the inner city? Factors such as location, physical capacity of buildings, differential quality of teaching staff, inequitable distribution of teacher force and diminishing resources for education all make the dream of choice an impossibility for deprived Black and white people. Or take the proposals for a national curriculum which are deeply steeped in racism. They clearly reject the pluralist nature of Britain's contemporary culture and also reject the Swann Committee of Inquiry's recommendations for a curriculum which reflects the multicultural nature of the society. Because of the multiracial and multilingual make-up of inner-city schools, the proposed national curriculum will fail to meet its stated objective 'to develop the potential of all pupils and equip them for citizenship'.

There is no proposal to incorporate an anti-racist or multicultural perspective in any of the subject working groups. The chances of Black and ethnic minority people being involved in the working groups are slim. If, and when, chosen, will these specially selected tokens have any demonstrable track records in applying the practical experience of multicultural and anti-racist curriculum development?

As presently proposed, community and heritage languages will find no place among the 'modern foreign languages' listed as a foundation subject. Yet these are an established feature of everyday life for many Black people in the inner cities. To deny the right of community languages to survive within the curriculum is to deny logic, to deny a basic human right and to deny the existence of bilingualism unless of European origins.

Nationally prescribed tests will be riddled with linguistic and cultural bias if the task group on assessment and testing does not include members familiar with anti-racist education and, therefore, capable of developing acceptable tests relevant to multiracial classes. Compulsory

testing, if not fairly applied for diagnosis and screening so as to improve classroom practices relevant to the education needs of Black pupils, will, in effect, reinforce the low levels of expectation held by many white teachers of Black children, which will, in turn, be compounded by low achievements. Equally, records of achievement and pupil profiles should only be established if teachers' generalised assumptions about Black pupils have been overcome to ensure fair treatment. Criteria for and methods of compiling such records must be free of culture and race bias, thus necessitating some Black involvement at all stages.

Further education, too, must be looked at. Many county schools have over recent years seen working-class children give their verdict on education with their feet. Many Black pupils aim to leave as soon as they can because they have achieved little or nothing and regard their experience as either having minimal relevance to their life chances or even as a waste of time. Maybe they are in the schools which produce the 'never-to-work' young people. Nevertheless, many of them look to colleges of further education as a way of getting the 'good education' that they failed to receive at school. This 'second chance' to make good and ultimately become competitive in the job market is crucial for many Black and poor white people. That is why many inner-city colleges are full of Black and other ethnic minority young people desperately in search of academic and professional qualifications.

There is a potential threat in the government's proposals to place control of the management of LEA-maintained colleges in the hands of independent governing bodies, to be made up largely of business interests selected by ministerial dictat. These governing bodies, though unlikely to have empathy with Black students' needs and aspirations, will be responsible for making appointments; the probability of equal opportunities policies and practices being applied cannot be certain.

If colleges are required to maximise their income by offering full-cost courses, this will have a detrimental effect on Black students, who currently pursue academic courses in large numbers in their local colleges. There is the prospect that, in future, colleges will have to reject those people who have most need of further education but are unable to pay for it. As a consequence, Black and poor white students will suffer and colleges unable to fill places will have to shrink or close.

The proposed great education reforms are then about choices: choice of the best for the advantaged and well-off, and choice of what is left for the rest. One island (the elite schools) will provide the future workforce, the other (the sink schools) will produce the jobless, fodder for the galaxy of training schemes, and the people for low grade, short-term and insecure employment. What happened to parental choices, rights and entitlements for Black people, poor whites and those with special educational needs?

HERMAN OUSELEY

Exeter and the Orange Order

Ever since Mrs Thatcher came to power in 1979, the Conservative Party has spoken of the tourist industry as Britain's 'real hope for the future'.¹ In 1987 the English Tourist Board launched a five-year strategy to stimulate investment and create jobs so as to fulfil what it perceived to be a new 'tourist potential'. The strategy will include close cooperation with central and local government to develop run-down docks and industrial areas and transform them into theme parks, holiday villages and exhibition complexes.² Naturally, the Tories, in order to capitalise on this tourist potential, are promoting an image of Britain as rich in culture. But the culture they present is that of a little England of pageantry and tradition, of horseguards' parade and kings and queens, drawn from all that is reactionary and conservative in British history.

Labour-led Exeter council (in the south-west of England), however, in their bid to exploit the tourist industry are bidding fair to out-Tory the Tories. From July to November 1988, the Council is planning to hold mass celebrations* to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the landing of the Dutch ruler, William of Orange, near Exeter in 1688. The fact that William of Orange – who is seen to have abolished 'Popery' and brought Protestant domination to the north of Ireland at the infamous Battle of the Boyne – is the figurehead of the Orange Order seems to have escaped this Labour-led authority, as has the fact that the Orange Order, the oldest Protestant sectarian organisation in Northern Ireland, has, since its inception almost 200 years ago, been implicated in wave after wave of attacks on the Catholic community.

The propaganda potential of the celebrations has not escaped Northern Ireland's Orange groups; nor is their significance lost on Britain's largest fascist party, the National Front, which sees its cause as inextricably linked to the struggle for an independent Protestant Ulster. Both groups are planning to appropriate Exeter's tourist event and turn it into a celebration of loyalism and fascism. One National Front faction has already announced that it will be bringing its supporters from all over the country to Exeter.³ And the Imperial Orange Council of the World has booked a week-long conference in the Exeter area and plans, also, to hold a march. Not only have the Labour members of Exeter Council betrayed their own lack of understanding of what a socialist cultural festival should be, but they have also displayed a gross and unpardonable ignorance of the embittered history of Ireland.

*Exeter Council justifies spending £60,000 on the William of Orange celebrations on the grounds that it is not celebrating William of Orange as a symbol in the history of Northern Ireland but rather is commemorating his role as the British monarch who ushered in the era of constitutional monarchy, and celebrating Anglo-Dutch friendship.

The roots of the Orange Order

The Orange Order was founded in Ulster in 1795 (over 100 years after William of Orange landed) at a time of great political turmoil and unrest against English domination, during which Catholic small farmers were being driven off the land in ever greater numbers. A Catholic agrarian movement, the Defenders, had already been formed to protect Catholic small farmers physically from expulsion. But opposition to English rule was not confined to Catholics; the radical United Irishmen movement, headed by middle-class Presbyterians, called for an independent Ireland, and some Presbyterian small farmers were also opposed to English political and economic domination. The Orange Order (established on masonic principles) was initially set up to counter the activities of the Defenders, who were seen not only as a threat to the land-owning interest, but as possible harbingers of revolution and potential allies of the United Irishmen. By rallying Protestant anti-Catholicism and fear of revolution to its side (or, where that failed, intimidating and railroading the Presbyterian small farmers into its ranks), the Orange Order served to deflect a potentially progressive alliance across the class and religion divide. From its very inception, members of the Orange Order were involved in horrific attacks on Catholic agrarian communities – burning down houses and forcing people off the land with great brutality.

But if these were the foundations upon which the Orange Order was built, it did not become pre-eminent until the time of the first Home Rule Bill (1886). Liberal proposals to give Ireland the right to self-government (but not full independence from Britain) were vehemently opposed by Conservatives (as well as some dissidents within their own ranks). Home Rule was seen as a direct threat to both the land-owning and the newly emerging industrial interest. On the one hand, it would bring in its wake new demands for land reform which would threaten the landlords' holdings. On the other, the union with Britain provided industrialists with direct access to the new markets of the British empire, and thus guaranteed them security and wealth. Moreover, the industrialists soon found that the Orange Order could give them security against working-class militancy, as Orangeism bound all Protestants, irrespective of class, on the basis of religion.

Opponents of the Home Rule Bill cynically stirred up anti-Catholic feeling within Ireland. Lord Randolph Churchill, despatched to Belfast to 'play the Orange Card', told his audience there: 'Now may be the time to show whether all those ceremonies and forms which are practised in the Orange Lodges are really living symbols or only idle meaningless ceremonies.'⁴ Thus Orangeism began to be mobilised in the support of Unionism. What followed, from June to September of that year (1886), were viciously anti-Catholic riots.⁵ And from then onwards anti-Catholic rioting after the 12th July parades (the anniversary of the

Battle of the Boyne) became commonplace. Although the Home Rule Bill was defeated (as was the second in 1893), the links between the Orange Order and Ulster Unionist politicians had become firmly established; the allegiance of Protestant workers was secured through systematic discrimination against Catholics – discrimination that persists today.* Divisions amongst workers on grounds of religion also undermined trade union organisation.⁶ In time, the Orange Order also came to act as a recruitment agency for a private Unionist army – the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) – that stood behind an Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) prepared to declare a Provisional government if full Home Rule was granted.

The First World War, the rise of Republicanism and the War of Independence (1919-21) against Britain led to the partition of Ireland, with twenty-six counties (with a Catholic majority) forming the Irish Free State (later Eire). The Orange Ulster Unionist movement, which had consistently fought against the ending of the Union with Britain, was granted independent control of the six north-eastern counties of Ireland, which taken together had a Protestant majority. The new statelet would have its own parliament at Stormont but would also remain part of the British state, and send representatives to the Westminster parliament.

The creation of Northern Ireland gave rise from the very beginning to systematic oppression of and discrimination against what was now a Catholic minority within its borders. It was, de facto, an Orange state, based on Orange ideology, Orange organisation and Orange politics. Control over the Catholic minority was fully institutionalised in the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act passed by the Stormont parliament in 1922. This gave the government wide-ranging powers of arrest, detention, internment, and corporal and capital punishment, plus a catch-all clause that covered anything overlooked in the other provisions. Moreover, the Minister of Home Affairs could even delegate his powers to any police officer. The law moved South African Justice Minister Vorster in April 1963 to remark admiringly that he ‘would be willing to exchange all the legislation of that sort for one clause of the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act’.⁷ To ensure Unionist control over local government (with all that implied for discrimination in housing, employment and services), election boundaries were redrawn on several occasions. This gerrymandering was further supplemented by a restriction of the franchise in local elections which produced near total Unionist control of the Province’s local authorities.

*‘Catholics are two and a half times as likely to be unemployed as Protestants’, (Mr Peter Viggers, Industry Minister at the Northern Ireland Office, quoted in the *Guardian* 5 February 1988.)

For nearly half a century the gerrymandering in Northern Ireland was clear to see,⁸ but few on mainland Britain cared to look. Then, in the late 1960s, opposition to this discrimination emerged as a civil rights movement, inspired by the black civil rights movement in the USA, demanding 'One man, one vote'. This challenge was met by the full force of the Northern Ireland state which, in traditional style, let loose its police force on the Catholic community, while Orange mobs beat down resistance. Marches were attacked and police went on the rampage through Catholic areas.

In 1969 British troops were sent in by the Labour government in order, it was stated, to protect Catholics from Orange gangs, who had unleashed a campaign of violence against them. The irony is, of course, that the troops have been used further to suppress the Catholic minority. Draconian emergency powers were refined and the armed sectarian Northern Ireland police forces were renamed and then supplemented by British troops.

But the loss of its own Northern Ireland parliament in 1972, the nationalist resistance, and the endless round of new 'initiatives' emanating from Westminster have served to intensify the siege mentality of the Orange movement. At the same time as the traditional class alliance between the Protestant industrialists and the Protestant workers has begun to crack, a much more fundamentalist, violent and sectarian Orange threat has emerged. The Official Unionist Party has now lost its monopoly of popular Protestant support to other unionist parties, particularly the Democratic Unionist Party, led by the Reverend Paisley, the bible-bearing bigot. Even more sinister has been the re-emergence of loyalist paramilitary groups. Suspicious now of Tory and Labour alike, these groups see themselves as having more in common with the small but growing fascist groups in (mainland) Britain.

The 'revolution' in Ulster

The principal British fascist group, the National Front (NF), like all such post-war groups, has built itself up on the basis of popular anti-black racism. With few black people in Ulster to scapegoat and the Orange Order dominating the political right, the NF did not set its sights on the Province till the early 1970s. The NF established its first Belfast Office in April 1974 and was warmly welcomed by the re-formed and outlawed UVF; in September of the same year the NF held a pro-Orange march in London.⁹ But even before this, gun-running involving British fascists and Protestant paramilitary forces had taken place.¹⁰

The NF believes that Unionist opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985¹¹ has created a 'revolutionary' situation in Northern Ireland. The chair of the National Front, Nick Griffin, has declared that 'our British revolution will start in Ulster' and that the present situation there represents the best opportunity for a genuine

'national revolution' anywhere in Europe.¹² NF leaders regularly visit Northern Ireland; new NF branches have been established there; NF members have participated in recent loyalist marches and even anti-Catholic riots, and selected NF members have gone to Ulster for paramilitary training.¹³ In Britain the NF openly advocates independence for Ulster and regularly attacks protest marches against British rule in Northern Ireland, which it sees as advocating a united Ireland.

So it is that the 'green and pleasant land' of south-west England is being seen as a vital base for the fascists' Ulster campaign. Already, in November 1986, on the first anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the NF joined forces with the Orange lodges for a protest march which brought intimidation and violence to the small and usually quiet Somerset town of Bridgwater.¹⁴ This could well be a foretaste of what is being planned for the neighbouring county of Devon, whose principal town of Exeter, together with the nearby village of Brixham, are to be the centre of the William of Orange celebrations. Parades, rallies and marches have had a crucial symbolic and organising role for the Orange movement of Northern Ireland. As the celebrations will last from 7 July to 20 November the NF and the Orange Order have plenty of opportunities to promote their cause, protest over the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and to bring the 'Ulster revolution' to mainland Britain. The distressing fact is that, despite the continued warnings of Exeter Anti-Fascist Action, it is a Labour-led Council which is giving them the opportunity to do so.

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

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- 12 Quoted in *Searchlight* (January 1987).
- 13 See *Searchlight* (April-June, August and November 1986, January 1987).
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Book reviews

'There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack': the cultural politics of race and nation

By PAUL GILROY (London, Hutchinson, 1987). 271 pp. £7.95

Paul Gilroy has written a hugely ambitious book. His stated intentions are many and mostly laudable, his achievements are uneven but certainly deserving of critical attention. At the centre of the book – which ranges, among other things, over ethnocentrism and British culture, policing and criminalisation, youth, music, anti-racism – is the relation between race and class. He wishes to introduce a 'sophisticated theory of culture into the political analysis of "race" and racism in Britain, by claiming the term back from ethnicity'. He hints at a vision of ruthlessly modernising class analysis. And then there is what I think is his most cherished ambition, which is to make a contribution to the relatively new sociology of social movements. He will have to do more than he does in this book to finally accomplish these tasks – but he does attempt to map out the terrain here.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to read him – literally, because of the self-consciously difficult language of the new sociology. And there is something else. In spite of his championing of black and Third World experience, there is something very European about the way in which he expresses his concerns. Perhaps a review should start by acknowledging and accounting for this – since the major burden of his book is to place black social action in the mainstream of European progressive intellectual discourse.

It has become a commonplace to observe that marxism and sociology in the European radical intellectual tradition have entered each other and often dressed themselves in the same clothes, so that they've come to be able to pass for each other – sometimes indistinguishable, not even recognising their difference any more. So marxism has lost the authority of its purpose, and sociology is puffed up with the pretence of its taking a lead in discerning social movements. It is as though

sociology has succeeded in intimidating marxism through its detailed analyses of the overwhelmingly reformist nature of modern social movements in Europe – what used to be called pressure group politics. And this, sociology claims to have demonstrated, is the only relevant form of organising for the changes that liberationists anticipate. Further, sociology claims an authority to pronounce on these matters based on the fact that it is more in touch with the social reality that it surveys. Marxism has countered by wielding its authority with regard to theorising and re-conceptualising what sociology merely describes. Marxism shows off these days with erudite, elaborate, ‘discouring’ interpretations of the real world as its highest objective. And in the wake of this betrayal, more and more, socialism in Europe, which used to be the objective of marxist praxis, has floated free of its scientific moorings, lost its revolutionary bearings, and abandoned its proletarian purpose.

The socialism which is practised in Britain is touched and fashioned by this intercourse between marxism and sociology. This peculiar socialism accommodates itself to an institutionalised class politics, as distinct from a revolutionary class politics. It is a socialism which has lost its way and admits to being embarrassed by its own tenets and its own *raison d’être*. Some socialists have even come to denounce class as a tool for critical analysis, and as an organising principle of the radical and revolutionary struggles of the oppressed and exploited.

Gilroy might argue that he declares his loyalty to revolutionary class by leaning towards the critical class theorist Prezowski and away from the renegade Gorz. (And there is much that is intelligent in the way he discusses these matters.) But the text also inclines to the use of phrases like ‘a coalition of forces’, ‘personal autonomy with collective empowerment’, ‘collective political action’, which bespeak an opposing politics. And the penultimate paragraph of the book talks about ‘taking on board C.L.R. James’ important observation that there is nothing more to organise because organisation as we have known it is at an end’, while at the same time requiring people to act ‘socially and cohesively’ – which strikes me as either nonsense or plain equivocation.

This ambivalence about class and class organisation seems to have driven Gilroy, like many of the European progressive intellectuals, to the discovery of culture as a vehicle of social change. Now this interest in culture is almost certainly derived from the twentieth-century Asian, Central and South American, and African, class-based, socialist movements which threw up the idea of cultural revolution. But to the extent that this is not explicitly recognised, culture and cultural expression is being credited in Europe with spontaneously and independently creating social change. So no mention of Mao, or Cardenas, or Cabral. What is worse is that in Europe this promotion of the cultural coincides with the promotion of the personal over the political – although not so much in Gilroy – or it drifts in and out of culturalist generalisation and

error – which does happen with Gilroy.

In the most innovatory sections of his book, the author presents a commentary on what he calls the ‘political dimensions to the expressive culture of black community in Britain’ – ‘the construction of community by symbolic and ritual means in dances, clubs, parties and discos’. There have been other attempts to do this (notably by S. Clarke in *Jah Music*), but not to insert the material into the social movements paradigm established by the likes of Touraine, Castells and Melucci. And Gilroy certainly stakes his claim here. I suspect, though, that he would be the first to admit that the claim has been staked in haste – and there are consequences. He talks of contemporary black community and culture in Britain, and knows or pays lip service to the fact that that community has been made in common by Asians and African-Caribbeans in the main. But in his culturalist vein he discusses only Afro-black expressive culture as black, and that ‘ethnically’ in parts. His discussion is often merely celebratory, when he clearly intends to do critical analysis. I like Smiley Culture described as an organic intellectual. But how does Rasta’s reggae pan-Africanism differ from the Pentecostal’s gospel-soul pan-Africanism? What is he saying, for example, in the following reflection on the predicament of Rastafari in the throes of the 1981 urban uprisings – ‘the officially recognised and sponsored leadership drawn predominantly from theologians and dogmatists, rather than artists and musicians, was ill-equipped to meet the historic challenge posed by negotiations with rather than (mental or physical) escape from Britain’s Babylon’? How do we make sense of the political variety and difference in these cultural practices? The entire discussion feels hasty – full of contradictions, pretend insight, and descriptive accounts passing as analysis and explanation.

Gilroy’s ‘cultural’ is determining neither in the immediate nor in the final instance, interesting cement that it is, comfort that it is, sigh that it is. This comfort, hustle, survival is, of course, social resistance at the level of ‘making some space’ – where racism would deny even the grace of that dignified ‘space’. And it tips over into political resistance when explicit mass organisational forms focus ‘survivals’ into a movement. But it tips over into ‘mafiaism’ and criminal careerism where the politics of the community falters.

Now, in the Third World and black experience analysis, popular expressive culture – in music, dance, orature, religious practices – is an important repository of social and political meanings, i.e. how people think. We could argue that this expressive culture may well provide the ‘best’ gauge of how fast the people can, do and will move politically. Further, it is clear that the expressive culture can be(come) engaged in political movements. But it is the political actors and actions of the movement that will determine the level and the contribution of that engagement. Gilroy confuses expression *through* culture with cultural expression.

A similar failure surfaces in his critique of institutional anti-racism, for this is also pitched at a purely cultural level. Gilroy makes an extended critique of the GLC's 'anti-racist' advertising campaign of the early 1980s (one of the least memorable and significant – for good or ill – of its activities) which he compares unfavourably with the earlier Rock Against Racism which brought together youth, music, and a political intention. He also criticises the GLC campaign by comparison with community struggles such as those of the Newham 7 and Newham 8. But surely Gilroy, who was after all a GLC officer at the time and therefore in a position to know, should also bring into the equation both the GLC's material support for these and many other 'popular' community campaigns of the period and a consideration of whether Rock Against Racism, for all its appeal, had any lasting effect.

In the end, then, the edifice of concepts and analysis constructed by Paul Gilroy is like a house divided against itself. On the one hand, he wishes to point out that black community politics cannot be and should not be contained within either the pragmatism of contemporary anti-racism or the tradition of British institutionalised class politics. But, although he cursorily dismisses Sivanandan's contribution to this position as promising but limited, the expressive image of 'a different hunger' as used by Sivanandan speaks more to this than the volumes which Gilroy will undoubtedly contribute to the subject. On the other hand, Gilroy wishes to illustrate the way in which people with political objectives can and do mobilise expressive cultural forms and artists in the cause, and that in black culture this is normal. But in lending this material to the sociology of social movements, and to the social forces discourse movement, he moves towards a kind of cultural utopianism.

This, however, seems to be the dominant tendency in the present conjuncture – for, an increasingly stratified black community has thrown up a division of labour as between those who change the world, those who interpret it and those who interpret the interpreters. Unlike the black writers of the '50s, '60s and early '70s who wrote out of and for the struggles in which they were themselves engaged (the 'organic intellectuals' proper), Gilroy appears to appropriate struggle for the purpose of his theorising. The insights he throws up on, say 'anti-racism', ethnicism, Labour left nationalism and so on, concern issues which have already been fought out on the ground (not least by the Institute of Race Relations). Gilroy, alas, continues to tilt at them at the level of ideas.

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COLIN PRESCOD

The British Empire as a Superpower 1919-1939

By ANTHONY CLAYTON (London, Macmillan, 1986). 545 pp. £35

'A major reason why Great Britain was anxious to keep the Empire together in this period was to use the Empire's enormous potential strength for peace, freedom and the general benefit of mankind.' So concludes Anthony Clayton, senior lecturer in modern history at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, at the end of his massive study of the British empire between the World Wars. Earlier, he writes of 'humane exploitation', of 'relatively limited repression' and that the empire's record can 'overall be defended'.

Paradoxically, Clayton's is an *essential* book, because whatever crude apologetics he might choose to engage in, it nevertheless opens up for critical examination an area of British history too long neglected on the Left. His is a military history of the empire and, although written in a celebratory tone, his scholarship is such that he provides ample material for a more subversive project. His book can be read against the grain — as a critical history of the armed bodies of men that the British state maintained to protect its empire from both internal and external challenge, and of the many military operations that these armed bodies were engaged in between the World Wars. Clayton, in effect, turns the spotlight on an area of British history that more liberal historians would rather pretend never happened. From the full-scale invasion of Afghanistan in 1919 through to the military operations involving the virtual reconquest of Palestine that were only finally concluded in 1939, Clayton provides a detailed account of the British state's bloody career of counter-revolution and colonial repression during a period euphemistically considered to be 'between the Wars'.

For too long British history in this period has consisted of little more than the downfall of Lloyd George, the general strike, the fall of the 1929-31 Labour government, the great depression and, lastly, appeasement. What has been missing from this catalogue of domestic historical highlights is any awareness of Britain as an empire, as an empire held together not by sentiment or mutual interest, but by the British state's crude ability to apply force on a massive scale if and when necessary. Clayton's study decisively restores this dimension to British history. He establishes beyond any doubt that the British state was *the* major counter-revolutionary force in the world in the 1920s, and that while its position was increasingly challenged in the 1930s by the rise of rival imperialisms, it still possessed the ability to ruthlessly crush internal opposition.

At the end of the First World War, the empire was confronted by serious rebellions in Ireland, Egypt, Iraq, Somalia and Waziristan, as well as being involved in large-scale military interventions in Soviet Russia, Iran and Afghanistan. The little known invasion of

Afghanistan involved four army divisions and a strong commitment from the RAF. At the height of the campaign British aircraft were dropping a ton of bombs a day on Afghan villages and towns. When Kabul was bombed, even the ladies of the royal harem fled on to the streets in panic, something which the author finds amusing. Although these conflicts stretched British resources to the limit, the empire emerged intact, relying more and more on air power to suppress internal unrest.

One of the most interesting sections of the book concerns the military build-up in China in the late 1920s. By early 1927 a full division had been assembled in Shanghai, ready to meet any challenge to the British position from the Kuomintang or the communists. At sea a large naval task force, consisting of two aircraft carriers, twelve cruisers, twenty destroyers, twelve submarines and various other craft, stood by ready to intervene. The need never arose, but the importance of the British build-up should not be underestimated.

In the 1930s the empire's position rapidly deteriorated as it came under threat from Italy, Japan and Germany, and also from increasingly sophisticated internal resistance movements. There was rebellion in Burma, widespread public disorder in India involving 60,000 arrests and the Fakir of Ipi's insurgency in Waziristan that tied down 50,000 troops, tanks, armoured cars, artillery and five RAF squadrons. Most important, however, was the great Arab revolt in Palestine, which Clayton describes as 'the most sophisticated challenge in the 1919-1939 period'. This insurgency was only suppressed after two divisions had been deployed and the country reconquered with considerable brutality. Villages were burned down, prisoners were tortured and shot out of hand and on one occasion eight Arabs died of heat stroke after being deliberately made to stand in the sun for a long period. Hostages were chained to trolleys in front of trains to set off any mines the rebels might have laid. It was in this counter-insurgency campaign that Orde Wingate first developed the pseudo-gang techniques later to be used by Kitson and the like in Kenya, Malaya, Ulster and elsewhere.

Without this British repression, which effectively broke Arab resistance in Palestine, it is most unlikely that the state of Israel would ever have been established in 1948.

Despite his quite explicit and unashamed pro-imperialist stance, Clayton has written a book that is unintentionally of great use. The scale of British military activity that he reveals in this period is a positive revelation and needs to be followed up vigorously by historians on the Left.

Leicester

JOHN NEWSINGER

From Homicide to Slavery: studies in American culture

By DAVID BRION DAVIS (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986). 305 pp.

American culture in the late 1980s possesses an infinite capacity for self-parody. Today's western gunslingers cruise Californian freeways taking pot shots at passing cars. Today, even poverty is chic for Bloomingdales' shoppers who spend \$400 for 'bag lady' dolls and loyalty is as cheap as an Ollie North haircut. Tomorrow's captains of industry are today's thrusting 12-year-olds who attend summer camps to learn how to make wise investments, while inner-city black kids are told that if the American Dream is not within their grasp, their families are to blame.

There is little enough in David Brion Davis' book which speaks directly to the type of society which America has become. The nineteen studies which make up the volume were written over a period of some twenty-five years, and perhaps it is not surprising to find essays concerned largely with the nineteenth century and conceived in the 1950s – such as the analysis of the cowboy myth in 'Ten-Gallon Hero' – celebrations of American innocence. But the preface of the book gives a different promise, proposing to explore the connection between homicide and slavery (both concerned with 'the extreme limits of dehumanisation') and hence the dark side of American culture. The book is divided into four sections: violence and virility in American culture, the redeeming west, problems of loyalty and identity, and studies in slavery and antislavery. Most of the essays are vividly written and some of them raise important questions about preserving social cohesion in a rootless environment and lashing in predatory capitalism with some kind of moral restraint. But the homicide/slavery theme is never taken up in a serious way and many of the most crucial insights feature only as throw-away lines.

For instance, in 'Some ideological functions of prejudice in antebellum America', Davis describes the role played by anti-Masonry, anti-Catholicism and anti-Mormonism before Bolshevism made its appearance as bogey-in-chief. He maintains that 'movements of counter-subversion' are 'symptomatic of a profound need for community and consensus' and goes on to suggest that tensions leading to attacks on Freemasons, Catholics and Mormons were exacerbated by local economic and social conflicts, with nativism made to serve business interests. This very important final point is not taken far enough. But Davis does at least make it, and he does ask a question which seems an audacious one for a bourgeois scholar writing in 1963: do 'the movements of counter-subversion point in the direction of totalitarianism?'

Other essays in the volume contain similar glimpses of untapped riches underlying the literary criticism, intellectual and psycho-history

which are his main tools of analysis. There are occasional hints of larger forces at play – of class, imperialism and the workings of capitalism – but these are never systematically pursued, and slavery remains for Davis what it was for Hegel: a problem of human parasitism.

In one of his throw-away insights, this one contained in an essay on 'Slavery and the post-World War II historians', Davis does admit that a dimension may be missing: 'attention devoted to racial conflict and racial adjustment – problems easily consigned to the realm of group psychology – may well have obscured questions of class, culture and power that lead to the structural foundations of American society.' It is his own failure to probe those structural foundations which makes this volume of essays, while readable and entertaining, ultimately disappointing.

Boston, Massachusetts

NANCY MURRAY

Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers

By JAMES FERGUSON (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987). 171 pp.
£14.95 cloth.

A positive offshoot of Haiti's troubled passage to democracy after the flight of Jean-Claude Duvalier will, hopefully, be renewed international interest in the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Not before time. As the world's first independent black republic and former 'pearl of the Antilles', Haiti has long deserved more serious attention in English-speaking academic and political circles. The veil of obscurity and opprobrium thrown up by three decades of dictatorship under Francois and later Jean-Claude Duvalier compounded French-speaking Haiti's isolation from the English-speaking Caribbean and Spanish-speaking Central America.

As a concise, well-written political history of Duvalierism, *Papa Doc, Baby Doc* is a welcome addition to the small number of studies in English of this most fascinating of countries. While Ferguson ably traces the rise and fall of Duvalierism in the early chapters, the later sections of the book which chronicle the last few months of the Duvalier regime are, in view of the immediacy of the events, mainly reportage.

Ferguson describes the racial resentment between the three antagonistic classes – the white settlers, the mulatto population (who had property rights but suffered political discrimination) and the black slaves – which came to a head in the French colony of Saint Domingue after the revolution in 1789. White settlers and mulattoes vied for prominence in the immediate post-revolutionary period. But it was a black slave army, rising in rebellion in 1791 under the leadership of Toussaint

L'Ouverture, which over the next ten years was to defeat first the island's white settlers, then Spanish colonists, a British expeditionary force and a mulatto coup, and finally the French army to establish the independent state of Haiti in 1804.

The achievements of Toussaint and later Dessalines are rightly seen as a proud episode in black history (see C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins*), but Ferguson also shows how Haiti's precocious independence bore bitter fruit. The massive indemnity, which was the condition of France's eventual recognition of Haiti's independence in 1825, effectively bankrupted what had been the richest colony in the Caribbean, whose trade exceeded that of the thirteen North American colonies at the time. By the end of the century an estimated 80 per cent of national revenue was devoted to debt repayment. The early years of independence also saw the breakdown of the plantation system and the creation of a subsistence economy of small farmers. The increased pressure on land led inexorably to a cycle of deforestation and soil erosion of possibly irreversible proportions. Moreover, despite the initial victory of the black army of Toussaint and Dessalines, the mulatto population (as Ferguson shows) continued to rise to positions of political and financial supremacy throughout the nineteenth century. Mulatto dominance was reinforced by the US occupation from 1915 to 1933, which added Haiti to the list of US 'protectorates' in the region and strengthened Haiti's political and economic dependence on the US.

The resentment of the politically disenfranchised black population towards the mulattoes was to underpin the survival of Duvalierism. François Duvalier, or 'Papa Doc' as he became known, was elected president in 1957 with the support of the black urban middle class and medium-size landowners. During the fourteen years of his rule, he built cleverly upon this power base and successfully outwitted his enemies. By guile or force, opposition from political parties, church and army was eliminated. The president's personal power was sustained by a private palace militia – the infamous Tontons Macoutes – who terrorised the population. 'Baby Doc' proved to have less of an instinct for survival than his father, whom he succeeded in 1971. His marriage to Michele Bennett in 1980, which realigned the presidency with the mulatto elite, began a process which untied the complex knot of alliances which had sustained Duvalierism. Ferguson describes how Baby Doc's regime finally lost the support of the business sector, the army and, crucially, the US administration, before disintegrating in the face of popular protests in February 1986.

Since the flight of Jean-Claude the Haitian people have lamented the survival of 'Duvalierisme sans Duvalier'. Through strikes and demonstrations they have consistently demanded a real 'dechoukaj', or 'rooting out', of Duvalierism from Haitian society. *Papa Doc, Baby Doc* is a valuable aid in helping us understand the political background

to Duvalierism and to Jean Claude's demise, though a more detailed analysis of the roots of Duvalierism in the countryside – that is, as a system of extortion and oppression of the rural population by a 'predatory state' – would help us better understand the scale of the challenge that remains to uproot it finally. As the attempts throughout 1987 to thwart the democratic process have shown, Duvalierism as a system will not be eclipsed by the formal transition to constitutional democracy. The last freely-elected Haitian president was, after all, François Duvalier.

London

COWAN COVENTRY

Escape from Pretoria

By TIM JENKIN (London, Kliptown Books, 1987). 240 pp. £5

Escape from Pretoria is one of the more remarkable books to come out of South Africa in recent years. It tells how three people, Tim Jenkin (the author), Stephen Lee and Alex Moumbaris staged a dramatic escape from Pretoria's top security prison. Alex Moumbaris had been jailed since 1973 for 'conspiring with the ANC to instigate violent revolution in South Africa'; Jenkin and Lee were both jailed in June 1978 for leaflet bombing. Basing their escape plan on Charriere's book *Papillion* – it had been allowed into the prison because of the authorities' ignorance of its contents – the prisoners contrived within one year to make several wooden keys with which they were able to unlock the prison doors. The keys were made covertly with tools and equipment from the prison workshop, despite intensive surveillance. Among other things, the book is a testament to the intelligence, determination and solidarity among the comrades, who made the escape possible.

The leaflet bombing, for which Jenkins and Lee were imprisoned, was a means of broadcasting and publicising ANC messages on events such as the South African invasion of Angola and the anniversary of Sharpeville. The leaflet bomb is devised to scatter leaflets so widely that even if the authorities move in, it is virtually impossible to retrieve them all. As a strategy, it brought media publicity to the ANC, and made available to the ordinary public information to which they would not otherwise have had access.

In the wake of the uprisings in the townships, the information leaflets were considered to be so threatening to apartheid that the full weight of the state was brought down heavily on both Jenkin and Lee. In the process is revealed the incompetence and vindictiveness of the security service, its arrogance and claim to infallibility. The book exposes, too, the timidity of a section of the legal profession and the sham of 'due

process of law' in political cases. We see the willingness of many professional groups to collude with injustice and thereby corrode the 'democracy' which they feign to defend. Ultimately, however, we delight in the downfall of the prison authorities, brought about by their own routine and regularity.

The book is interesting in other respects – it tells something about what makes a young, white South African join the liberation struggle. Jenkin, in explaining how he came to be involved with the ANC, points out the difficulty for a white person of 'breaking free of the web of privilege and racism' by which she or he is surrounded, and describes the turmoil and disbelief in which the parents of young whites accused of political offences find themselves. Apartheid propaganda is insidious and white people of all classes accept it. In telling how some white people manage to break loose from this indoctrination, Jenkin has this to say:

some are fortunate to have enlightened parents and so never become deeply ensnared in the barbs of racism; they break free easily. Others may meet someone who influences their lives or have personal experiences which help them to break loose. Most whites who manage to see the light, however, reach that position by the intellectual route ... For all who do find the way, the route is uphill and slippery.

The slippery road to the liberation struggle for Jenkin was long and arduous. For twenty-one years he accepted the South African propaganda without question. This is not surprising. He grew up in a world where there were no black people other than in a subservient role, he never went into the black townships and he related to black people as if they were not citizens of the same country. It was not till he came to England – initially because of his interest in motor-cycle racing – that his beliefs underwent a change. Forced to work at a fibre-glass factory in Kent, a job he accepted with reluctance because in South Africa only blacks did such menial work, he spotted the inequality between those who ran the factory and the shopfloor workers. He began to read books about political theory, race and class analysis. He returned to Cape Town to study for his social science degree and it was while there that he met Stephen Lee. Their political awareness led them to join and train with the ANC in Europe, after which they returned to South Africa to start the leaflet bombing.

The escape from Pretoria Prison was facilitated by the happy coincidence of the fact that Jenkin and Lee were put in the same prison with other ANC white comrades (Denis Goldberg, jailed 1964; David Kitson 1964; Alex Moumbaris 1973; David Rabkin and Jeremy Cronin 1976; Tony Holiday 1976). Their arrival changed the mood and atmosphere in the prison among the comrades. From the outset, Jenkin and Lee believed that escape was possible, and worked to that end with the full

support of their fellow prisoners. All the comrades approached their allotted tasks with almost military precision and formed an 'escape council' where difficulties were resolved democratically. There were teething problems, such as the failure of the outside contact to respond quickly enough to their request for a get-away car. Nonetheless, the solidarity among all the comrades, especially those who did not participate in the actual escape, deserves proper acknowledgment, particularly as they were putting their own security on the line. The sheer intelligence and audacity of this enterprise deserves the salute of all those who support a free and non-racist South Africa.

Manchester

PAUL OKOJIE

Israel and the American national interest: a critical examination

By CHERYL A. RUBENBERG (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1986). 446 pp. \$24.95

Despite periodic scandals, despite Israeli practices in the occupied territories, the peculiar relationship between the US government and Israel has never been seriously put on the American political agenda. Cheryl Rubenberg's important book addresses this question. She argues that the relationship is based on two factors:

- 1) a perception, based on erroneous assumptions and a total misunderstanding of the complexities of the Arab world but that nevertheless acquired the legitimacy of absolute truth in dominant sectors of the American foreign policymaking elite, that saw Israel serving as an extension of American power in the Middle East and a strategic asset to U.S. interests; and 2) the power of the pro-Israeli lobby in American domestic politics.

Rubenberg documents with painstaking clarity the development of these factors and points to the fact that 'the interests of the lobby have *coincided* with the official government position toward Israel, which has been one of support since 1948'.

The Israelis and their American Zionist allies have succeeded in gaining what was initially termed a US 'moral commitment' to assure the survival of the Jewish state – a commitment whose scope was expanded to 'the security and survival of Israel'. The myth of the mortally threatened Israel has been maintained, despite the massive evidence to the contrary of Israel's military power and its use of that power against its Arab neighbours – let alone the Palestinians. Successive American administrations have accepted Israeli definitions of its self-interest as the equivalent of the US national interest: Israel is held to be a strategic asset to the United States. The author notes that 'No one ever

questioned the contradiction of how a country could be *both* a besieged, vulnerable prey *and* the guarantor of American interests in a critical region vital to US interests.'

The major part of Professor Rubenberg's book is devoted to establishing the interconnections between the US and Israel over the past forty years. What emerges clearly from her research is the enormous military, economic and political support which successive US administrations have provided to Israel, how essential that support has been and still is for Israel's survival and Israel's arrogance towards its protector:

Israel views the vast amounts of American military and economic support provided by the United States as an inherent obligation the United States owes to Israel, without any Israeli responsibility or concern for American interests – and Washington has acquiesced in this situation.

It is, argues Rubenberg, the convergence of the two key factors mentioned above – the 'strategic asset' argument and the power of the pro-Israeli lobby – that explains the unprecedented nature of this arrangement.

The crux of her argument is that the former assumption is fundamentally mistaken. Instead of achieving US objectives – stability and order in the Middle East and the exclusion of the Soviet Union from the region – US subservience to Israel's priorities has led to instability, disorder and a major Soviet presence and the constant humiliation of pro-US 'moderate' Arab leaders and regimes. The increasingly anti-American and anti-western fundamentalism and 'terrorism' which has come to characterise the region is also seen as a consequence of this arrangement.

The power of the pro-Israeli lobby is well-documented by the author. The picture of Gary Hart and Walter Mondale competing in 1984 to prove which of them was more pro-Israeli was indeed a sorry one. The massive attack on Jesse Jackson for his supposed 'anti-Semitism' and the defeat of two members of Congress for being insufficiently pro-Israel provided potent examples of the lobby in action – and clear warnings to other legislators. The annual Congressional budgetary process of increasing the amount of aid to Israel to ever higher levels and the turning of loans into gifts shows how well the legislators understand that power. The virulently anti-Arab television programmes and films and the distortions of the news media are also well-documented, as is the vituperation heaped upon any – authors, reporters or academics – who dare to challenge the present pro-Israeli, pro-Zionist set up.

This part of Professor Rubenberg's argument is undoubtedly correct. Her case for the 'strategic asset' argument being a myth is, however, more problematic. Claudia Wright, for example, has seen it differently.

According to her, the relationship is 'costly in terms of Israel's draw on US foreign aid funds, but cheap in averting the obligation that would otherwise exist for the United States to preserve its interests with its own regional garrisons'.¹ These include Israel's role in arming, training and running the security forces of the repressive regimes in Central America, and its role in black Africa, in support of the genocidal government of Sri Lanka and in support of the apartheid regime of white South Africa (all of which is well-documented).

There is a congruence between Israel's interests and activities and those of US administrations which are attempting to run a world empire with as little cost in American – particularly white middle-class American – lives as possible. Regional surrogates are of great importance and one which has such powerful political support within the US itself is of the greatest importance. Israel will be immune from criticism from liberals – the counter-charge of 'anti-Semitism' against those who criticise its actions is usually enough to silence opposition. Over Nicaragua, for example, 'opponents of the contra war, fearful of being labelled "anti-Semitic", can no longer afford to ignore the Israeli role, if they are truly serious about stopping this war'.²

What is at issue in interpreting the US/Israeli relationship, therefore, is not the 'myth' of Israel as a strategic asset, but the reality of Israel's violent, ethnocidal policies against the Palestinian and Arab peoples of the Middle East and the congruence between Israel's policies and US imperialist interests in that region and throughout the Third World. Professor Rubenberg does call on the

American people to take an interest in the foreign policy of their government, to attempt to understand the complex reality of the Middle East, including the perceptions and aspirations of the Arab people in general, and the Palestinians in particular, and to regain control of their government so that its policies serve the interests of its citizens – not merely the interests of a dominant elite.

A first step on that path will have to involve a willingness to challenge the pro-Israeli lobby's use of 'anti-Semitism' and its appropriation of the memory of the six million as covers for Israeli aggression and support for US imperialism.

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