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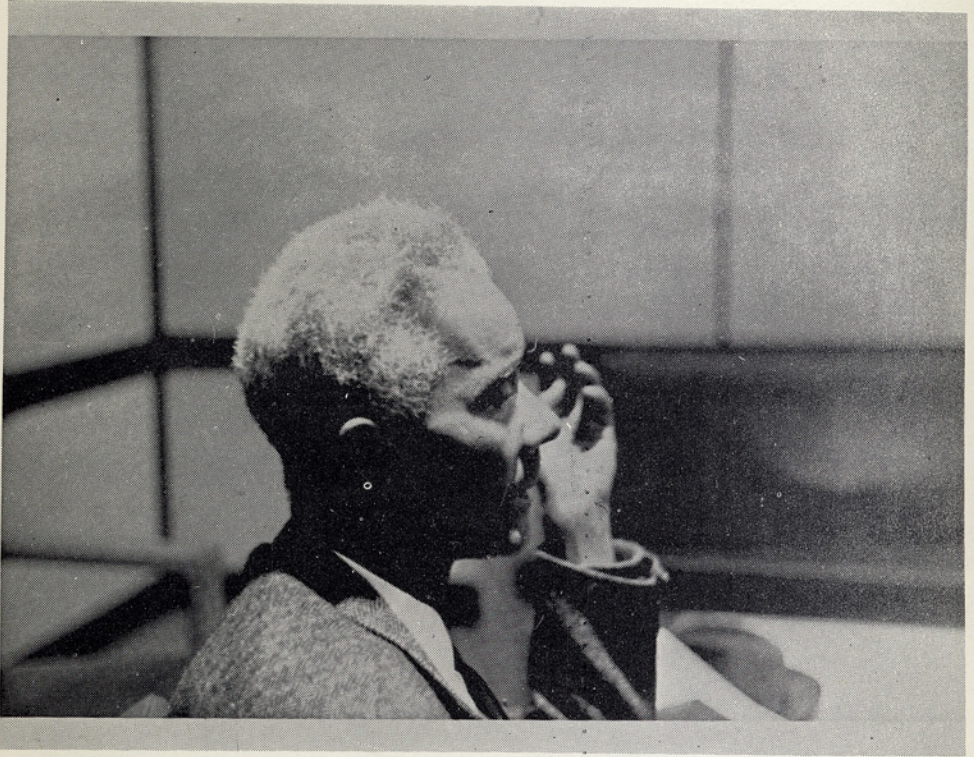
CLR James



radical america







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ABOLISH THE STATE  
PRINTING CO-OP U. A. S. S. DETROIT  
ALL POWER TO THE WORKERS

**CLARENCE R. JAMES**

**RADICAL**

**AMERICA**



## Critique of Organization from Notes on the Dialectic (1948)

Now what is one to say of a political organization that goes to the people with the proposal to organize a body of professional revolutionaries, in the Leninist manner of 1903. Lenin in 1903 faced neither the organic organization of workers as workers (Menshevism) nor the special organization of workers as revolutionaries (Stalinism).

What do such 1903 revolutionaries of 1948 propose to organize? A new international of genuine revolutionaries? But the genuine revolutionary workers are in the Stalinist party, and many in the Menshevik International (and the CIO) are far more revolutionary than many Leninists were. There is nothing more to organize. You can organize workers as workers. You can create a special organization of revolutionary workers. But once you have those two you have reached an end. Organization as we have known it is at an end. The task is to abolish organization. The task today is to call for, to teach, to illustrate, to develop spontaneity--the free creative activity of the proletariat. The proletariat will find its method of proletarian organization. And, contradiction par excellence, at this stage the vanguard can only organize itself on the basis of the destruction of the stranglehold that the existing organizations have on the proletariat by means of which it is suffering such ghastly defeats. But more, much more of that later.

The doctrine of Essence is an invaluable guide to watching organization and spontaneity develop in the labor movement. Organization has been the backbone of the proletarian movement. Every new stage has meant a more advanced type of organization which almost at once reflects the pressure of capitalism inside the proletariat. We have insisted upon the fact that the proletariat always breaks up the old organization by impulse, a leap: Remember that. But there comes a stage when organization, and the maintenance of the organization become ends in themselves in the most direct conflict with the essential movement of the proletariat. That we have seen as Actuality. Organization, as we have known it, has served its purpose. It was a purpose reflecting the proletariat in bourgeois society. The new organization, the new organism, will begin with spontaneity, i.e. free creative activity, as its necessity. It is by now clear to all except those blinded by ideological spectacles that organization is the obstacle, the opposite, the mountain, the error, which truth has to blast out of its way to find itself. If the Communist Parties are to endure, then the free activity of the proletariat must be destroyed. If the free activity of the proletariat is to emerge it can emerge only by destroying the Communist Parties. I can destroy these parties only by free activity. Free activity means not only the end of the Communist Parties. It means the end of capitalism. Only free activity, a disciplined spontaneity, can prevent bureaucracy. Essence fought its way, reflecting itself until it came into the open in Actuality and fought its way to its notion of itself. The proletariat has reflected itself in organization after organization until now it will see organization for what it is. The impulse, spontaneity, with which it created new organizations, the means by which it created them, must now become the end.



# Introduction

The first problem that presents itself in introducing C.L.R. James to a new audience is the man's range. The author of a novel and short stories, a play, histories; works on literary criticism, economic analysis, Marxist philosophy, sports, political analysis; writer on nationalism and problems of the underdeveloped world, writer on the working class and the industrialized world; lecturer on Shakespeare and on art; and, above all, participant in the events of his time--where does one begin?

One element of the problem is that much of the work is out of print and unavailable (although some of it is in the process of being republished). The other element is the ease with which one could refer to James' genius and energy as the explanation for much of what he has done. It would be deceptive because it would conceal a coherence in his work, a unity and totality that is crucial to understanding it as a body of Marxist thought.

James was born in 1901 in Trinidad. His early interests were cricket, which he played and reported, and independence. He was the first to put forward in the West Indies the demand for complete self government and has the status there of a founding father of independence. In the early 30s he wrote a biography of Captain Cipriani, a Trinidadian labor leader, and a pamphlet published in London, *The Case for West-Indian Self Government*.

In 1932 he moved to England where he reported cricket for the then *Manchester Guardian* and became heavily involved in Marxist politics. He participated in the Independent Labour Party and joined the Trotskyist movement. It was during these years that he wrote his play (in which both he and Paul Robeson appeared on the London stage), a novel and some short fiction. But some major works of the same period began to indicate the road ahead. He wrote *The Black Jacobins*, the history of the San Domingo revolution which established Haiti as an independent nation; he wrote *World Revolution*, a study of the rise and fall of the Comintern; and he translated into English Boris Souvarine's biography of Stalin. Theoretically and historically he was fully immersed in both the industrial and the underdeveloped world.

In the middle 30s, George Padmore, who later became adviser to Nkrumah after the achievement of Ghanaian independence, formed the International African Service Bureau. Padmore was a West Indian whom James had known since childhood. James became editor of the group's

periodical. A handful of black men maintained the African Bureau as the only center for the struggle for the independence of Africa through the 30s and 40s. Most of them were West Indians but included in their number were Jomo Kenyatta and, later, Kwame Nkrumah.

In 1938 James came to the United States on a lecture tour and stayed for 15 years. He had discussions with Trotsky in Mexico on the problems of American blacks and participated in the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. By the outbreak of World War II, however, the Marxist movement in general and the Trotskyist movement in particular was a shambles. Stalinism had descended to the barbarism of the Moscow trials and the Stalin-Hitler pact. Trotskyism had proved totally inadequate in understanding what was happening to the world. It was a period of crisis in the Marxist movement around the world, a period of defections and defeats.

James embarked on the task of reconstituting a viable Marxism adequate to the needs of the times. In this I think it is possible to see what his particular history and background contributed. Coming from a colonial country that had yet to make its history, James had escaped the deep-rooted pessimism of the European intellectuals who had suffered a generation of defeats culminating in slave labor camps and death camps. At the same time, he had been thoroughly immersed in both the history and experience of the industrial world and of the Marxist movement.

James formed a small group that functioned for a number of years as an opposition tendency within the Trotskyist movement. It began with a return to fundamentals, to Marxist economics and the study of *Capital*, and to the Marxian dialectic and the study of Hegel and Lenin. As in England (although restricted considerably by government harassment) he insisted on a unity of theory and practice and participated in the early 40s in the organization of sharecroppers in southeast Missouri and maintained ties with industrial working class movements in Detroit, Buffalo and elsewhere.

Basically, what emerged was a conception of a new stage of capitalism, state capitalism. This conception had to prove itself by application in all areas: In the Soviet bloc as well as in western Europe, in the stage of the working class and working class organization as well as the stage of capitalist technology and capitalist organization. That is, Marxism had to be a totality based on historical necessity or it became fragmented into a series of particular empirical analyses based on historical or national accident. (The latter development is richly illustrated by the French philosopher, Louis Althusser.)

What characterizes the theory of state capitalism is its dialectical unity. There are other theories of state capitalism, but they are not theories of capitalist society, rather, they are theories of Russian society. There are other theories of state capitalism (or close to it) which document the growing stratification of western capitalism but they do not document the growing revolutionary capacity of the industrial working class. In fact most theories of stratification tend to assume the cooptation of the workers as a consequence.



Basing himself on the closest study, both of the real working class in the U.S. and of the dialectical method, James was able to foresee, even if in abstract form, the new forms that were emerging. In 1948 he wrote in *Notes on Dialectics*: "It is obvious that the conflict of the proletariat is between itself as object and itself as consciousness, its party. The party has a dialectical development of its own. The solution of the conflict is the fundamental abolition of this division. The million in the CP in France, the 2½ millions in Italy, their domination of the Union movement, all this shows that the proletariat wants to abolish this distinction which is another form of the capitalistic division between intellectual and manual labor. The revolutionary party of this epoch will be organized labor itself and the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie. The abolition of capital and the abolition of the distinction between the proletariat as object and proletariat as consciousness will be one and the same process. That is our *new notion* and it is with those eyes that we examine what the proletariat is in actuality." (pp. 46-47, emphasis in original.)

"Hegel had followed his system to the end and established the faculty of thought (through his World-Spirit) as the moving principle of the Universe. Under this banner he had linked being and knowing. And he had made thought *free*, creative, revolutionary (but only for a few philosophers). Marxism followed him and established human labor as the moving principle of human society. Under this banner Marx linked being and knowing, and made labor and therefore thought, free, creative, revolutionary, for all mankind. Both in their ways abolished the contradiction between being and knowing. Now if the party is the knowing of the proletariat, then the coming of age of the proletariat means the abolition of the party. That is our new Universal, stated in its baldest and most abstract form. . . ." (p. 150.)

Eight years before the event the form of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 (and of the French Revolution of 1968 after it) is predicted, not as a matter of desire (as in the case of the council communists) but as a matter of dialectical development rooted in history.

From this, from the belief of the inherent revolutionary capacity of the modern working class stems the fundamentally democratic nature of the theory of state capitalism. It is anti-vanguard, anti-elite not simply because participatory democracy is nicer than manipulation but because that is where the proletariat has reached. These theoretical conceptions and James' own experience as a colonial also contributed to his breakthrough on the theory of black liberation. The movement in the U.S. in the 30s and 40s was sunk in the quagmire of "black and white, unite and fight." In practice that denied the revolutionary capacity of black people and subordinated the black struggle to the working class struggle for socialism. James pressed for a reversal of that view. As early as his discussions with Trotsky in 1938 he saw the independent validity of the struggle of black Americans and its integral part in the struggle for socialism.

In 1952 James was expelled from the United States. (He has since been permitted to return.) He left behind a body of ideas and a body of work

which had become a total Marxist viewpoint. For most of the years that followed he lived in England. But on two occasions he returned to Trinidad. On the first occasion he became editor of *The Nation* and secretary of the Federal West Indian Labour Party and participated with the People's National Movement (PNM) in the achievement of independence from Britain. Two developments brought that collaboration to an end. One was the defeat of Federation (the unification of the small new nations of the Caribbean) by the narrow manipulations of the middle class politicians of independence. The other was the turn of Eric Williams, prime minister of Trinidad, from an independent course to collaboration with American imperialism. James left Trinidad again in 1961.

In 1967 James returned to the West Indies to report international test cricket. When he set foot on Trinidad, Dr. Williams put him under house arrest in an early use of the powers with which he is now attempting to destroy the anti-imperialist movement in Trinidad. The resulting outcry led to the formation by James of the Workers and Farmers Party which challenged Williams' rule. After its defeat in 1967, James again returned to England. Two of the leaders of that party, the Indian leader, Maharaj, and the head of the oil workers' union Weekes, have this year been jailed by Williams.

The political dimensions of James' Marxism are extended by his writings on art, sport and literature. Involved are several factors, in particular a respect for the audience as a significant factor in the development of any art. But this is not understood in any shallow populist sense. There is maintained at the same time a fundamental appreciation of the role of the artist as an individual of genius and especially his usefulness in understanding society, in telling us things about ourselves that formal social science cannot illuminate.

What I have tried to present in this small space is, quite obviously, not a critical introduction to C.L.R. James. Enough of those will appear in due time. The need now is to make the man and his work familiar to a broad audience. This has been made difficult over the years by, on the one hand, the tremendous weight and power of the major parties and states that call themselves Marxist and submerge any dissident voices. On the other hand, there has been the separation and fragmentation of much of his work through harassment and movement which makes the totality difficult to see. Hopefully, it will now begin to emerge.



Martin Glaberman

*The selections in this volume were necessarily limited by the limitations of our resources. We therefore make no claim for this body of material save as an introduction to James' thought. At some point in the future we hope to compile a second anthology; until then, the reader is referred to the bibliography for works currently in print, and to our expectation of speedy reprints of several presently unavailable volumes. The actual decisions on the material to be included herein were made by the Editors, with the aid and consultation of Martin Glaberman, and the encouragement of C.L.R. James.*

P.M.B.



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uated in Trinidad in 1893, the year in which the elite Queen's Park Oval Club was organized. In 1895 a team from England had been beaten by an all-Trinidad side; two years later, during the centennial celebrations of British rule, cricket was prominent on the agenda, and in 1900 the first West Indian team visited England. Cricket clubs, and the inevitable village cricket pitch, could be found all over Trinidad. Everyone knew the game; young C. L. R. James was a cricket fanatic, and so was Learie Constantine, whose father had himself been an outstanding exponent of the game. In the 1920's Learie Constantine went to England to play in the County leagues for Nelson in Lancashire. He soon established a reputation as being one of the best "all-rounders" that the game had ever seen, a sportsman of legendary prowess and one of the early heralds of the phenomenal ability that West Indians were to bring to the game.

Someday, perhaps, a Trinidad writer will attempt a full-scale social history of the complex little island civilization that was Trinidad in the early years of the century. In his cricket memoirs, *Beyond a Bound-ary*, James provides glimpses into such facets of the period as the Puritanical code impressed on the O.R.C. schoolboy, the metropolitan sophistication of a group of local intellectuals and literateurs, and the manner in which membership in the various local cricket clubs was determined by very fine class and color distinctions. The excellence of the cricket played was a product of the sublimated class conflict which found an outlet in the keen rivalries between the clubs, also of importance was the ready, informal, availability of top players for matches at every level. Under the veneer of class and caste there had taken shape a self-confident, robust, uninhibited national character for which cricket—like Carnival!—provided a disciplined, formalized, means of expression. West Indian social conditions of the period, particularly in Trinidad, James seems to be saying, were analogous to the vigorous, pre-Victorian ethos which had produced W. G. Grace and the modern game of cricket: an England still unconquered by the Industrial Revolution, not finicky in morals, committed to enjoying life with gusto.<sup>16</sup> The parallel, if tenuous, is nonetheless fascinating. In Trinidad the lively, competitive, innovative neighborhood organizations of the urban *jammeters* had counterparts in many areas of the countryside. Tunapuna, the native district of James, Constantine and Nurse, has been described by Dom Basil Matthews as a frontier town, intensely clan-ish, and united as a semi-secret organization against outsiders. The cultural background, and the perhaps subconscious origins, of the intense populist faith which James developed into a unique method of revolutionary organization during his years as a sectarian radical, are





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# I. PHILOSOPHY & MODERN SOCIETY

Excerpt from: *Modern Politics* (1960)

I do not propose to preach any sermons here. Please get that out of your minds entirely. I am speaking about the good life from the point of view of society. It is a difficult question and it is made more difficult by the follies and inanities of statesmen. Let us presume for the sake of charity that it is political necessity (their necessity) which makes them talk so much nonsense. For example, Mr. Butler, who is an able man at his own British politics, rebuilt the political perspectives of the Conservative Party after its defeat in 1945 — a thing that Mr. Churchill could not possibly do; but Mr. Butler has told the people in Britain that in twenty-five years' time — a quarter of a century — the standard of living will be doubled. It is the kind of inanity that I want to warn you against and I would be glad if, when you hear it, you really express yourself, not offensively, but with the necessary contempt and scorn. That statement is without meaning. This is 1960. Fifty years ago, 1910, I am sure that the amount of goods, the quantity of services that were at the disposal of the average worker in a particular country were more or less about half what they are today. You know that in your own lives: what your fathers and grandfathers lived by, the goods and services they had were small in comparison with what you have today. That is the situation in Europe and in Britain as a whole. Has

that solved anything—the doubling of the standard of living, what you have at your disposal to use, the goods and services which are twice what they were fifty years ago? Has that solved any social or political problems? The social and political problems are today worse, more acute, than ever they were in 1910. But, you see, when he says in twenty-five years “we” will double the standard of living, he thinks that he will have doubled the number of votes for the Conservative Party, because, you see, his party, if left in power, will have been the one who will have done that for the workers. It is the kind of quantitative analysis, vulgar materialism — materialism of the most vulgar type — which makes absolute ruin of any attempt to form any sociological or social analysis of the development of society. People today are concerned with whether they will be able to live at all in twenty-five years’ time.

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The average Greek must have lived on what I expect would be today about fifteen or twenty-five cents a day. The houses in which they lived were extremely simple; the territory of Greece was very unproductive — chiefly dried fish, olives and olive oil, dried fruits. The houses were notoriously commonplace—four or five rooms, somewhere in the back for servants. But when you walked out in the streets of Athens you could see Plato, Aristotle, Pericles, Socrates, Phidias, Aeschylus, Sophocles and many more of that stamp, all at the same time; and they were active in the daily life of the city.

The question, therefore, of what is the good life is not to be judged by quantity of goods. What I said at the beginning is the most important, that community between the individual and the state, the sense that he belongs to the state and the state belongs to him. Rousseau, if you remember, expressed it with great violence. He said, “Before we have any kind of government, we have **agreed** to meet together, to work together, and I take my liberty, which is mine, my property, and I give it to the government along with yours, so that when I obey that government I am in reality obeying myself.” That, in my opinion, was the greatest strength of the City-State and the great strength of the Greek individual—the basis of a good life. It is hard for us to understand, but a Greek citizen could not conceive of his individuality apart from the polis, the City-State. It made no sense to him to think of it otherwise; and recently I have been **reading** a modern writer on the Greek City-State who says that even when there was no democracy, when there was an oligarchy (government of the rich) or monarchy (government of a king) or aristocracy (government of the nobles), even under these diverse regimes, the **Greek** had it in his head that the state was his and that the state **belonged** to him and he belonged to the state. If you observe their temples and their statues, it was centuries before the Greek ever put up a statue away from a temple.

He would not put a statue in the middle of the square out there. The temple represented the state; and in the niches of the temple he would put statues; but the idea of a statue, i.e., an individual, somewhere else away from the building which symbolises the state was something utterly foreign to him.

There the good life for the individual citizen begins. Today we do not see much of that. We do not see that very much except in periods of revolution when people get together behind a programme and leaders. It is very rarely the state, an actual government. Sometimes it is a political party, sometimes it is a leader; and then you get an example again of what Rousseau means when he says that if the minority has to obey the majority merely because it is a majority, that is not liberty, that is not freedom. It may sound fantastic; it is not at all. Rousseau is insisting that the majority must represent the general will, and even if the minority is hostile but the majority represents the general will and the political leader or a political party most obviously represents the general will, then the minority must obey the majority because the general will is being expressed. The general will is expressed when its political form makes the individual feel himself part of the community. A mere majority vote over a minority—Rousseau and Hegel and others make it clear that when you have to obey because they have the police; they put you in jail if you don't. But strictly speaking, from a philosophical point of view, that is not democracy; that is not liberty. I grant you that this is not easy, you have to grapple with it and discuss it and work it out. (Think of your own recent history.) A minority, that is to say a group that finds itself in opposition, can submit itself and obey when it feels that the majority represents and is building a national community. Otherwise one big gang has power over a small gang, that is all. This I must warn you is the philosophical approach. But without this you cannot understand politics. And what is philosophy today becomes reality tomorrow.

### THE CONCLUSIONS OF HEGEL

I am not going into Hegel's philosophical methods and what constitutes the good life, the good citizen. I cannot do it; it is too much, it would need six lectures by itself. But I will give you his conclusions. They are stated in very profound philosophical form, but I think we can make a beginning and I shall give you one or two examples.

Human society is an organism; and he says that contradiction, not harmonious increase or decrease, is the creative moving principle of history. There must be opposition, contradiction — not necessarily contradiction amounting to antagonism, but difference, obstacles to be overcome. Without that there is no movement, there is only stagnation and decay. That was why the Greek City-States moved so far and so fast, and that is my hope for the development of the

West Indies too. Those states were so small that everybody had a grasp of what was going on. Nobody was backward; nobody was remote; nobody was far in the country; and people in the West Indies are even closer because we have methods of transport that bring us very rapidly together. It was within this narrow range that with great violence of conflict and so forth the Greek state leapt from social position to social position and made its marvellous discoveries and inventions. That is the moving force, the creative movement in historical development. That is the first point.

### **DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SELF-MOVEMENT**

Another point. All development takes place by means of self-movement, not organisation or direction by external forces. It is within the organism itself, i.e., within the society, that there must be realised new motives, new possibilities. The citizen is alive when he feels that he himself in his own national community is overcoming difficulties. He has a sense of moving forward through the struggle of antagonisms or contradictions and difficulties within the society, not by fighting against external forces.

Let me stop for a moment and give you one sharp example of that. We as West Indians feel that in fighting for the return of Chaguaramas and for self-government against British imperialism and so forth, we are fighting real political struggles. In a sense that is true. When the British go and the Americans go and the British flag comes down and the West Indian flag goes up and all face one another — it is then you are going to see real politics. That is not to say that what has happened up to now is not real. It is very real, but it is preliminary. When all that is achieved, then the fundamental forces inside this country, as in every country, will begin to show themselves. In fact Lenin's doctrine was, "We do not want to have imperialism; we want to get the imperialists out in order to carry on this struggle inside, free from interference by all these people." If I may venture a prediction based on historical experience, the exhilaration based on successful anti-imperialist struggle rapidly declines and a far more solidly based new social movement begins.

### **THE MASTERY OF WEALTH AND KNOWLEDGE**

Now we come to the tremendous jump that Hegel makes and that Marx and the others follow. It is not the world of nature that faces modern man. When Descartes, Copernicus, Bacon, the Royal Scientific Society of England, Spinoza and Hume and the rest of them, and early capitalism, early science, began, they were fighting to overcome nature and to learn to discipline nature and to turn nature to the uses of men. That was the struggle for the beginning of the modern world. But not today. Today man has not conquered

nature in general (you will never be able to conquer nature), but he is able to bend it, substantial qualities of it, to his own purposes; and the problem in the world today is not what it was for many centuries. You remember our friend St. John said there must be no sea because to cross the sea with their small boats was very troublesome and dangerous; also fruit trees would not bear once a year, but every month. You understand what he was driving at. The problem for centuries was to master nature. Not so today. The problem in the eyes of Hegel and in the eyes of Marx is the mass of accumulated wealth and scientific knowledge which man has built out of nature. That is the problem. It is difficult to see in the West Indies and in underdeveloped countries because we are still struggling to get some potatoes and to catch some fish and so on. But in the modern world today that is not the problem. In ten or twenty years it would be possible to feed adequately the whole population in the world. That will be no problem. The problem is how to handle, how to master the mass of accumulated wealth, the mass of accumulated scientific knowledge which exist in the world today. That knowledge is driving us to world suicide. Capital, I repeat, controls us. We do not control it.

This is so important that it is worthwhile going it over once more. Capital controls man. Man does not control capital. And this has reached such a stage that the great masses of men live in fear and anxiety. The good life for a modern citizen is impossible. We feel it here, but it is the great centres of population and industry that feel it most, and every human being is affected far more than he is consciously aware of.

### THE CAPITAL RELATION

Let us look at the movement of capitalist production again. You remember my analysis of a national economy as being 15 to 1, capital to labour; 8 to 1; 3 to 1, etc. You remember too it is the competition to improve this ratio which is the driving force of capital. The Trotskyists say Russia is a workers state because private capital is eliminated. We say that private capital or no private capital, this murderous competition goes on. Russia cannot ever stop to use its advance for the benefit of the people. That is subsidiary. It has to get rid of a perfectly valuable plant, etc., to keep up with America, and vice versa. And until we have international socialism, that will go on. The mass of accumulated wealth, knowledge, science, constantly preparing the basis for new weapons, new organisation of industry, new processes, prevent men ever being able to stop. They have no choice. The good life for the citizen is under these circumstances impossible, even when he has enough to eat. Capital, the capital relation, is the relation of men who have nothing to sell but their labour-power, and men who control or own the means of production. It was not always so. In the best periods of the Middle Ages, for



example, the peasant owned his land, the workman, the artisan, owned his tools. They controlled and ordered their own activity. It is interesting to note that England in those days was known as "Merrie England". Nobody would call the English today merry. Capital, you see, can transform national character.

The solution, Marxists say, is to put all this wealth under the control of the men who work in it. Then, and only then, will the mass of accumulated wealth and scientific knowledge be used for the benefit of the great mass of mankind. Otherwise you have value-production. As long as the wealth and knowledge are being guided by people who are concerned with preserving their position and their managerial status, this fanatical competition will continue, and man will constantly produce more means of production, and constantly improve means of production; and now they have become means of destruction pure and simple.

I hope nobody believes that they really want to spend weekends on the moon. They are not really interested in that. You saw the other day that a satellite has been brought down in Russia with two dogs in it. Everybody is talking about the dogs; that is not in the slightest degree important. What is important is that it was brought down in a particular spot. They are frantically trying in Russia to have this thing going round and round so as to be able to bring it down when they please at a particular spot that they please; and you do not have to know too much geography to know which is the spot they wish to bring it down at. (laughter) But in the United States they are busy morning, noon and night with exactly the same; and it will not be very long, in fact I do not know if it is not happening already, that we will be living an existence in which these two will have these things going round and round; and the next thing now is not to have yours going round and to bring it down where you want, but to prevent his, to stop it and bring it down back where it came from. (laughter) That is where we are. And you get the fundamental point that Hegel makes and Marx follows. He says, "It is not the struggle with nature it is not a struggle for food; it is not the struggle to overcome barriers, the seas, the rivers or to produce power or heat." They say that is not the problem any more. The real problem is to control this mass of machinery and scientific knowledge which is running away with us. I have indicated the Marxist solution. What other is there? I know of none. Our rulers of the great and dominant states are bankrupt, with no perspective but war and destruction. Is that so or not?

### THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

What is the good life? An individual life cannot be comfortable and easy or creative unless it is in harmony to some degree with the society in which it lives. The individual must have a sense of community with the state. That is where we began. And that today is impossible. We tend to think of the good life in terms of individual

well-being, personal progress, health, love, family life, success, physical and spiritual fulfilment. The whole point is that far more than we are consciously aware of these are matters of our relation to society.

I am not saying that the individual human being is consciously striving to adjust himself to society. Not at all. Since the days of Aristotle and even long before, the philosophers have understood that man seeks happiness and seeks to avoid misery; it is as simple as that. Only that is not at all an easy thing in a complicated world. The thing to understand is that progress is not simply the increased use of goods. That is utility — utilitarianism. That was the doctrine essentially of the men of the eighteenth century. But progress is the incorporation into the social and individual personality of the stage that society as a whole has reached, which means that a man must feel that he has at his disposal education, capacity and ability to handle the discoveries of his particular age. He need not have a great deal of money to be able to do that. He need not pile up a quantity of large houses with forty rooms, and a great deal of money and drinks. What a man needs is to eat and drink, and to eat and drink satisfactorily by modern standards is very little. That is not the problem. But he must be able to use, to handle, to have at his disposal the greatest discoveries, the latest discoveries which enhance and develop a man's social personality. An individual personality cannot live a satisfactory life if he is constantly aware of great new discoveries and inventions and possibilities around him from which he is excluded, worse still, that these are threatening him with destruction. The peasant of the Middle Ages did not have very much in comparison to what a modern farmer has; the artisan in his guild did not have for his use what the modern worker has. But he understood and controlled what he was doing. We, the great majority, do not. Marxism demands a universal education of all men in the achievements of modern society. It can be done, easily, but only when the masses of men and women are in control of society. Today a minority has as its first concern the preservation of its rights and its privileges, i.e., the maintenance of the capital relation.

#### **THE MODERN SOCIAL PERSONALITY**

So you see the good life demands a feeling that you are moving, you and your children. You must have a sense of movement and of overcoming difficulties within your organism; and if you are doing that, it does not matter what your wages are as long as you have a certain elementary level of material welfare. You must have a sense of movement, the sense of activity, the sense of being able to use or on the way towards understanding and controlling what makes your life. I do not mean gadgets the way the Americans play with things; I mean things that really matter. This is your personality; this is your social personality; and when this is taking place, although in certain countries they may have two or three times the amount of goods and utilities that you have, yet you can have

the good life. You go to a country like Ghana where the general level is even lower than what it is here, but you look at the people, you listen to them, you see what they are doing; you get a sense of movement and activity; they are going somewhere. They will have troubles of course; that does not matter. The Greeks had plenty of troubles.

An American woman told me once that she forgot herself and told an audience of white women in the United States—she was a Negro woman—speaking to them she said, “When I look at you all, I am sorry for you because although whites are oppressing us and giving us trouble, I am actively on the move; every morning I am doing something, but you all are just sitting down there watching.” It is not the complete truth, but it is a great part of the truth. This is some idea of what I mean by what is the good life—the individual in relation to society. It is **not**, it never has been, merely a question of what the vulgarians call “raising the standard of living”. Men are not pigs to be fattened.

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Let me sum up in terms which you should study and work at until they are an instinctive part of your outlook and method of thought :

- a) All development takes place as a result of **self-movement**, not organisation or direction by external forces.
  - b) Self-movement springs from and is the overcoming of antagonisms **within** an organism, not the struggle against external foes.
  - c) It is **not** the world of nature that confronts man as an alien power to be overcome. It is the alien power that **he has himself created**.
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Progress is not automatic. Hitler threw Europe back. To fight him it was necessary to fight the theory of race. But that theory can rise again. These reactionary concepts can become more acute than they have ever been in the past, not because they are ineradicable from human nature, but because of the fundamental disorder in modern society. You see what the Marxist solution is. Marxists envisage a total change in the basic structure of human relations. With that change these problems will not be solved overnight but we will be able to tackle them with confidence. Such are the difficulties, contradictions and antagonisms, and in the solution of them society moves forward and men and women feel they have a role in the development of their social surroundings, the individual can find a more or less satisfactory relation to the national and to the world community. It is in this movement that we have the possibility of a good life. But if, on the other hand, reaction grows and the question of the freedom

of women and the question of the equality of classes and the question of differences of race begin to be used, as they are bound to be used by reactionary elements in the defence of positions which are no longer defensible, society becomes sick unto death, the individual cannot find an easy relation either to the state or to his fellow men. Not only are we affected in war, in economics, and in politics. The turmoil the world is in reacts upon our most intimate consciousness in ways we are not aware of. And every succeeding day brings us nearer and ties us closer to the decisive forces and conflicts of the modern world. What has suddenly erupted in Cuba is going to place many of the things I am talking about before you, first for your discussion, and sooner or later for your decision. We were not able to choose the mess we have to live in, this collapse of a whole society, but we can choose our way out. I am confident that these lectures will help and not hinder.



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## II. AMERICAN SOCIETY

### The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the U.S. (1947)

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The decay of capitalism on a world scale, the rise of the CIO in the United States, and the struggle of the Negro people, have precipitated a tremendous battle for the minds of the Negro people and for the minds of the population in the U.S. as a whole over the Negro question. During the last few years certain sections of the bourgeoisie, recognizing the importance of this question, have made a powerful theoretical demonstration of their position, which has appeared in *The American Dilemma* by Gunnar Myrdal, a publication that took a quarter of a million dollars to produce. Certain sections of the sentimental petty bourgeoisie have produced their spokesmen, one of whom is Lillian Smith. That has produced some very strange fruit, which however has resulted in a book which has sold some half a million copies over the last year or two. The Negro petty bourgeoisie, radical and concerned with communism, has also made its bid in the person of Richard Wright, whose books have sold over a million copies. When books on such a controversial question as the Negro question reach the stage of selling half a million copies it means that they have left the sphere of literature and have now reached the sphere of politics.

We can compare what we have to say that is new by comparing it to previous positions on the Negro question in the socialist movement. The proletariat, as we know, must lead the struggles of all the oppressed and all those who are persecuted by capitalism. But this has been interpreted in the past—and by some very good socialists too—in the following sense: The independent struggles of the Negro people have not got much more than an episodic value, and as a matter of fact, can constitute a great danger not only



to the Negroes themselves, but to the organized labor movement. The real leadership of the Negro struggle must rest in the hands of organized labor and of the Marxist party. Without that the Negro struggle is not only weak, but is likely to cause difficulties for the Negroes and dangers to organized labor. This, as I say, is the position held by many socialists in the past. Some great socialists in the United States have been associated with this attitude.

## OUR STANDPOINT

We, on the other hand, say something entirely different.

We say, number one, that the Negro struggle, the independent Negro struggle, has a vitality and a validity of its own; that it has deep historic roots in the past of America and in present struggles; it has an organic political perspective, along which it is traveling, to one degree or another, and everything shows that at the present time it is traveling with great speed and vigor.

We say, number two, that this independent Negro movement is able to intervene with terrific force upon the general social and political life of the nation, despite the fact that it is waged under the banner of democratic rights, and is not led necessarily either by the organized labor movement or the Marxist party.

We say, number three, and this is the most important, that it is able to exercise a powerful influence upon the revolutionary proletariat, that it has got a great contribution to make to the development of the proletariat in the United States, and that it is in itself a constituent part of the struggle for socialism.

In this way we challenge directly any attempt to subordinate or to push to the rear the social and political significance of the independent Negro struggle for democratic rights. That is our position. It was the position of Lenin thirty years ago. It was the position of Trotsky which he fought for during many years. It has been concretized by the general class struggle in the United States, and the tremendous struggles of the Negro people. It has been sharpened and refined by political controversy in our movement, and best of all, it has had the benefit of three or four years of practical application in the Negro struggle and in the class struggle by the Socialist Workers Party during the past few years.

Now if this position has reached the stage where we can put it forward in the shape that we propose, that means that to understand it should be by now simpler than before; and by merely observing the Negro question, the Negro people, rather, the struggles they have carried on, their ideas, we are able to see the roots of this position in a way that was difficult to see ten or even fifteen years ago. The Negro people, we say, on the basis of their own experiences, approach the conclusions of Marxism. And I will have briefly to illustrate this as has been shown in the Resolution.

First of all, on the question of imperialist war. The Negro people do not believe that the last two wars and the one that may overtake us, are a result of the need to struggle for democracy, for freedom of the persecuted peoples by the American bourgeoisie. They cannot believe that.

On the question of the state, what Negro, particularly below the Mason-Dixon line, believes that the bourgeois state is a state above all classes, serving the needs of all the people? They may not formulate their belief in Marxist terms, but their experience drives them to reject this shibboleth of bourgeois democracy.

On the question of what is called the democratic process, the Negroes do not believe that grievances, difficulties of sections of the population, are solved by discussions, by voting, by telegrams to Congress, by what is known as the "American Way."

Finally, on the question of political action. The American bourgeoisie preaches that Providence in its divine wisdom has decreed that there should be two political parties in the United States, not one, not three, not four, just two: and also in its kindness, Providence has shown that these two parties should be one, the Democratic Party and the other, the Republican, to last from now until the end of time.

That is being challenged by increasing numbers of people in the United States. But the Negroes more than ever have shown—and any knowledge of their press and their activities tells us that they are willing to make the break completely with that conception. . .

As Bolsheviks we are jealous, not only theoretically but practically, of the primary role of the organized labor movement in all fundamental struggles against capitalism. That is why for many years in the past this position on the Negro question has had some difficulty in finding itself thoroughly accepted, particularly in the revolutionary movement, because there is this difficulty—what is the relation between this movement and the primary role of the proletariat—particularly because so many Negroes, and most disciplined, hardened, trained, highly developed sections of the Negroes, are today in the organized labor movement. . .

First the Negro struggles in the South are not merely a question of struggles of Negroes, important as those are. It is a question of the reorganization of the whole agricultural system in the United States, and therefore a matter for the proletarian revolution and the reorganization of society on socialist foundations.

Secondly, we say in the South that although the embryonic unity of whites and Negroes in the labor movement may seem small and there are difficulties in the unions, yet such is the decay of Southern society and such the fundamental significance of the proletariat, particularly when organized in labor unions, that this small movement is bound to play the decisive part in the revolutionary struggles that are inevitable.

Thirdly, . . . there are one and a quarter million Negroes, at least, in the organized labor movement.

On these fundamental positions we do not move one inch. Not only do we not move, we strengthen them. But there still remains the question: what is the relationship of the independent Negro mass movement to the organized labor movement? And here we come immediately to what has been and will be a very puzzling feature unless we have our basic position clear.

Those who believed that the Negro question is in reality, purely and simply, or to a decisive extent, merely a class question, pointed with glee to the tremendous growth of the Negro personnel in the organized labor movement. It grew in a few years from three hundred thousand to one million; it is now one and a half million. But to their surprise, instead of this lessening and weakening the struggle of the independent Negro movement, *the more the Negroes went into the labor movement, the more capitalism incorporated them into industry, the more they were accepted in the union movement. It is during that period, since 1940, that the independent mass movement has broken out with a force greater than it has ever shown before.*

That is the problem that we have to face, that we have to grasp. We cannot move forward and we cannot explain ourselves unless we have it clearly. And I know there is difficulty with it. I intend to spend some time on it, because if that is settled, all is settled. The other difficulties are incidental. If, however, this one is not clear, then we shall continually be facing difficulties which we shall doubtless solve in time. . .

Now Lenin has handled this problem and in the Resolution we have quoted him. He says that the dialectic of history is such that small independent

nations, small nationalities, which are powerless—get the word, please—*powerless*, in the struggle against imperialism, *nevertheless* can act as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which can bring on to the scene the real power against imperialism—the socialist proletariat.

Let me repeat it please. Small groups, nations, nationalities, themselves powerless against imperialism, nevertheless can act as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli which will bring on to the scene the real fundamental force against capitalism—the socialist proletariat.

In other words, as so often happens from the Marxist point of view, from the point of view of the dialectic, this question of the *leadership* is very complicated.

What Lenin is saying is that although the fundamental force is the proletariat, although these groups are powerless, although the proletariat has got to lead them, it does not by any means follow that they cannot do anything until the proletariat actually comes forward to lead them. *He says exactly the opposite is the case.*

They, by their agitation, resistance and the political developments that they can initiate, can be the means whereby the proletariat is brought on to the scene.

Not always, and every time, not the sole means, but one of the means. That is what we have to get clear.

## OUR TASK

Now it is very well to see it from the point of view of Marxism which developed these ideas upon the basis of European and Oriental experiences. Lenin and Trotsky applied this principle to the Negro question in the United States. What *we* have to do is to make it concrete, and one of the best means of doing so is to dig into the history of the Negro people in the United States, and to see the relationship that has developed between them and revolutionary elements in past revolutionary struggles.

For us the center must be the Civil War in the United States and I intend briefly now to make some sharp conclusions and see if they can help us arrive at a clearer perspective. Not for historical knowledge, but to watch the movement as it develops before us, helping us to arrive at a clearer perspective as to this difficult relationship between the independent Negro movement and the revolutionary proletariat. The Civil War was a conflict between the revolutionary bourgeoisie and the Southern plantocracy. That we know. That conflict was inevitable.

But for twenty to twenty-five years before the Civil War actually broke out, the masses of the Negroes in the South, through the underground railroad, through revolts, as Aptheker has told us, and by the tremendous support and impetus that they gave to the revolutionary elements among the Abolitionists, absolutely prevented the reactionary bourgeoisie—(revolutionary later)—absolutely prevented the bourgeoisie and the plantocracy from coming to terms as they wanted to do.

In 1850 these two made a great attempt at a compromise. What broke that compromise? It was the Fugitive Slave Act. They could prevent everything else for the time being, but they could not prevent the slaves from coming, and the revolutionaries in the North from assisting them. So that we find that here in the history of the United States such is the situation of the masses of the Negro people and their readiness to revolt at the slightest opportunity, that as far back as the Civil War, in relation to the American bourgeoisie, they formed a force which *initiated* and *stimulated* and *acted as a ferment*.

That is point number one.

Point number two. The Civil War takes its course as it is bound to do. Many Negroes and their leaders make an attempt to get incorporated into the

Republican Party and to get their cause embraced by the bourgeoisie. And what happens? The bourgeoisie refuses. It doesn't want to have Negroes emancipated.

Point number three. As the struggle develops, such is the situation of the Negroes in the United States, that the emancipation of the slaves becomes *an absolute necessity*, politically, organizationally and from a military point of view.

The Negroes are incorporated into the battle against the South: Not only are they incorporated here, but later they are incorporated also into the military government which smashes down the remnants of resistance in the Southern states.

But, when this is done, the Negroes are deserted by the bourgeoisie, *and there falls upon them a very terrible repression.*

That is the course of development in the central episode of American history.

## HISTORICAL ANTICIPATIONS

Now if it is so in the Civil War, we have the right to look to see what happened in the War of Independence. It is likely—it is not always certain—but it is *likely* that we shall see there some *anticipations* of the logical development which appeared in the Civil War. They are there.

The Negroes begin by demanding their rights. They say if you are asking that the British free you, then we should have our rights and, furthermore, slavery should be abolished. The American bourgeoisie didn't react very well to that. The Negroes insisted—those Negroes who were in the North—insisted that they should be allowed to join the Army of independence. They were refused.

But later Washington found that it was imperative to have them, and four thousand of them fought among the thirty thousand soldiers of Washington. They gained certain rights after independence was achieved. Then sections of the bourgeoisie who were with them deserted them. And the Negro movement collapsed.

We see exactly the same thing but more intensified in the Populist movement. There is a powerful movement of one and one-quarter of a million Negroes in the South (The Southern Tenant Farmers Association). They joined the Populist movement and were in the extreme left wing of this movement, when Populism was discussing whether it should go on with the Democratic Party or make the campaign as a third party. The Negroes voted for the third party and for all the most radical planks in the platform.

They fought with the Populist movement. But when Populism was defeated, there fell upon the Negroes between 1896 and about 1910 the desperate, legalized repression and persecution of the Southern states.

Some of us think it is fairly clear that the Garvey movement came and looked to Africa because there was no proletarian movement in the United States to give it a lead, to do for this great eruption of the Negroes what the Civil War and the Populist movement had done for the insurgent Negroes of those days.

And now what can we see today? Today the Negroes in the United States are organized as never before. There are more than half a million in the NAACP, and in addition to that, there are all sorts of Negro groups and organizations—the churches in particular—every *every single one of which is dominated by the idea that each organization must in some manner or another contribute to the emancipation of the Negroes from capitalist humiliation and from capitalist oppression.* So that the independent Negro movement that we see today and which we see growing before our eyes—is nothing strange. It is nothing new. *It is something that has always appeared in the*

*American movement at the first sign of social crisis.*

## A SIGN OF THE TIMES

It represents a climax to the Negro movements that we have seen in the past. From what we have seen in the past, we would expect it to have its turned towards the labor movement. And not only from a historical point of view but today concrete experience tells us that the masses of the Negro people today look upon the CIO with a respect and consideration that they give to no other social or political force in the country. To anyone who knows the Negro people, who reads their press—and I am not speaking here specially of the Negro workers—if you watch the Negro petty bourgeoisie—reactionary, reformist types as some of them are, in all their propaganda, in all their agitation—whenever they are in any difficulties, you can see them leaning toward the labor movement. As for the masses of Negroes, they are increasingly pro-labor every day. So that it is not only Marxist ideas; it is not only a question of Bolshevik-Marxist analysis. It is not only a question of the history of Negroes in the U.S.

The actual concrete facts before us show us, and anyone who wants to see, this important conclusion, that the Negro movement logically and historically and concretely is headed for the proletariat. That is the road it has always taken in the past, the road to the revolutionary forces. Today the proletariat is that force. And if these ideas that we have traced in American revolutionary crises have shown some power in the past, such is the state of the class struggle today, such the antagonisms between bourgeoisie and proletariat, such, too, the impetus of the *Negro movement toward the revolutionary forces*, which we have traced in the past is *stronger today than ever before*. So that we can look upon this Negro movement not only for what it has been and what it has been able to do—we are able to know as Marxists by our own theory and our examination of American history that it is headed for the proletarian movement, that it must go there. There is nowhere else for it to go.

And further we can see that if it doesn't go there, the difficulties that the Negroes have suffered in the past when they were deserted by the revolutionary forces, those will be ten, one hundred, ten thousand times as great as in the past. The independent Negro movement, which is boiling and moving, must find its way to the proletariat. If the proletariat is not able to support it, the repression of past times when the revolutionary forces failed the Negroes will be infinitely, I repeat, infinitely, more terrible today.

Therefore our consideration of the independent Negro movement does not lessen the significance of the proletarian—the essentially proletarian—leadership. Not at all. It includes it. We are able to see that the mere existence of the CIO, its mere existence, despite the fakery of the labor leadership on the Negro question, as on all other questions, is a protection and a stimulus to the Negroes.

## PENALTY OF DEFEAT

We are able to see and I will show in a minute that the Negroes are able by their activity to draw the revolutionary elements and more powerful elements in the proletariat to their side. We are coming to that. But we have to draw and emphasize again and again this important conclusion. If—and we have to take these theoretical questions into consideration—if the proletariat is defeated, if the CIO is destroyed, then there will fall upon the Negro people in the U.S. such a repression, such a persecution, comparable to nothing that they have seen in the past. We have seen in Germany and elsewhere the barbarism that capitalism is capable of in its death agony. The Negro people in the U.S. offer a similar opportunity to the American bourgeoisie. The



American bourgeoisie have shown their understanding of the opportunity the Negro question gives them to disrupt and to attempt to corrupt and destroy the labor movement.

But the development of capitalism itself has not only given the independent Negro movement this fundamental and sharp relation with the proletariat. It has created Negro proletarians and placed them as proletarians in what were once the most oppressed and exploited masses. But in auto, steel, and coal, for example, these proletarians have now become the vanguard of the workers' struggle and have brought a substantial number of Negroes to a position of primacy in the struggle against capitalism. The backwardness and humiliation of the Negroes that shoved them into these industries, is the very thing which today is bringing them forward, and they are in the very vanguard of the proletarian movement from the very nature of the proletarian struggle itself. Now, how does this complicated interrelationship, the "Leninist" interrelationship express itself? Henry Ford could write a very good thesis on that if he were so inclined.

## THE FORD EXPERIENCE

The Negroes in the Ford plant were incorporated by Ford: first of all he wanted them for the hard, rough work. I am also informed by the comrades from Detroit he was very anxious to play a paternalistic role with the Negro petty bourgeoisie. He wanted to show them that he was not the person that these people said he was—look! he was giving Negroes opportunities in his plant.

Number three, he was able thus to create divisions between whites and Negroes that allowed him to pursue his anti-union, reactionary way.

What has happened within the last few years that is changed? The mass of the Negroes in the River Rouge plant, I am told, are one of the most powerful sections of the *Detroit proletariat*. They are leaders in the proletarian struggle, not the stooges Ford intended them to be.

Not only that, they act as leaders not only in the labor movement as a whole but in the Negro community. It is what they say that is decisive there. Which is very sad for Henry. And the Negro petty bourgeois have *followed the proletariat*. They are now going along with the labor movement: they have left Ford too. It is said that he has recognized it at last and that he is not going to employ any more Negroes. He thinks he will do better with women. But they will disappoint him too. . .

## THE REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL

Let us not forget that in the Negro people, there sleep and are now awakening, passions of a violence exceeding perhaps, as far as these things can be compared, anything among the tremendous forces that capitalism has created. Anyone who knows them, who knows their history, is able to talk to them intimately, watches them at their own theatres, watches them at their dances, watches them in their churches, reads their press with a discerning eye, must recognize that although their social force may not be able to compare with the social force of a corresponding number of organized workers, the hatred of bourgeois society and the readiness to destroy it when the opportunity should present itself, rests among them to a degree greater than in any other section of the population in the United States. . .

Excerpt from:

*State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950)

**1. The Bureaucracy in Industry**

The first task of the revolutionary International is clarification of this term, bureaucracy. The Stalinists take advantage of the fact that Marx often used the term, bureaucracy, in relation to the mass of state functionaries. But with the analysis of state-capitalism by Engels, the word bureaucracy began to take on a wider connotation. Where Engels says "Taking over of the great institutions for production and communication, first by joint-stock companies, later on by trusts, then by the State," he adds: "The bourgeoisie demonstrated to be a superfluous class. All its social functions are now performed by salaried employees." (*Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, p.138.) These are bureaucrats.

The moment Lenin saw the Soviet, the new form of social organization created by the masses, he began to extend the concept, bureaucracy, to include not only officials of government but the officials of industry, all who were opposed to the proletariat as masters. This appears all through *State and Revolution* and, in its most finished form, in the following:

"We cannot do without officials *under capitalism, under the rule of the bourgeoisie*. The proletariat is oppressed, the masses of the toilers are enslaved by capitalism. Under capitalism democracy is restricted, cramped, curtailed, mutilated by all the conditions of wage-slavery, the poverty and misery of the masses. This is why and the only reason why the officials of our political and industrial organizations are corrupted—or more precisely, tend to be corrupted—by the conditions of capitalism, why they betray a tendency to become transformed into bureaucrats, i.e., into privileged persons divorced from the masses and *superior to the masses*.

"This is the *essence* of bureaucracy, and until the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown, *even* proletarian officials will inevitably be 'bureaucratized' to some extent."

Lenin's whole strategic programme between July and October is based upon the substitution of the power of the armed masses for the power of the bureaucrat, the master, the official in industry and in politics. Hence his reiterated statement that if you nationalize and even confiscate, it means nothing without workers' power. Just as he had extended the analysis of capitalism, to state-capitalism and plan, Lenin was developing the theory of class struggle in relation to the development of capitalism itself. This strengthened the basic concepts of Marxism.

Marx says: "The authority assumed by the capitalist by his personification of capital in the direct process of production, the social function performed by him in his capacity as a manager and ruler of production, is essentially different from the authority exercised upon the basis of production by means of slaves, serfs, etc.

"Upon the basis of capitalist production, the social character of their production impresses itself upon the mass of direct producers as a strictly regulating authority and as a social mechanism of the labour process graduated into a complete hierarchy. This authority is vested in its bearers only as a personification of the requirements of labour standing above the labourer." (*Capital*, Vol. III, p.1,027.)

This is capitalist production, this hierarchy. The special functions are performed "within the conditions of production themselves by special agents in opposition to the direct producers". (p.1,025.) These functionaries, acting against the proletariat in production, are the enemy. If this is not understood, workers' control of production is an empty phrase.

With the development of capitalism into state-capitalism, as far back as 1917, Lenin, in strict theory, denounced mere confiscation in order to concentrate his whole fire upon the hierarchy in the process of production itself, and to counterpose to this, workers' power. It thus becomes ever more clear why the Stalinists in their theory will have nothing whatever to do with state-capitalism and rebuke and stamp out any suggestions of it so sharply. The distinction that Lenin always kept clear has now developed with the development of capitalism over the last 30 years. It has now grown until it becomes the dividing line between the workers and the whole bureaucratic organization of accumulated labour, science and knowledge, acting against the working class in the immediate process of production and everywhere else. This is the sense in which the term bureaucracy must be used in Russia.

### **"A Higher Social Organization of Labour"**

It is upon this Leninist *analysis*, that the theory of state-capitalism rests and inseparable from this theory, the concept of the *transition* from social labour as compulsion,

as barracks discipline of capital, to social labour as the voluntary association, the voluntary labour discipline of the labourers themselves. Lenin in "The Great Beginning" theoretically and practically wrote an analysis of labour in Russia which the development of society *on a world scale* during the last 30 years, now raises to the highest position among all his work on Russia. This must be the foundation of a Marxist approach to the problems of economics and politics under socialism. In that article Lenin did two things:

(a) Established with all the emphasis at his command that the essential character of the dictatorship of the proletariat was "not violence and not mainly violence against the exploiters". It was the unity and discipline of the proletariat trained by capitalism, its ability to produce "a higher social organization of labour".

(b) Analysed the Communist days of labour given to the Soviet state and sought to distinguish the specific social and psychological characteristics of a new form of labour, and the relation of that to the productivity of labour.

With all its mighty creations of a Soviet state and Red Army, and the revolution in the superstructure, it is here that the Russian socialist revolution could not be completed. The "historical creative initiative" in production, the "subtle and intricate" relations of a new labour process—these never developed for historical reasons. But there has been a vast development of capitalism and of the understanding of capitalism all over the world since the early days of the Russian Revolution. The British Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Stalinist bureaucracy, the whole capitalist class in the U.S. (and in the U.S. more than anywhere else)—all declare that the problem of production to-day is the productivity of labour and the need to harness the human interest, i.e., the energy and ability of the worker. Many of them are aware that it is the labour process itself which is in question.

What they see partially, contemporary Marxism must see fully and thereby restore the very foundations of Marxism as a social science.

It is in the concrete analysis of labour inside Russia and outside Russia that the Fourth International can find the basis of the profoundest difference between the Third International and the Fourth International. The whole tendency of the Stalinist theory is to build up theoretical barriers between the Russian economy and the economy of the rest of the world. The task of the revolutionary movement, beginning in theory and as we shall see, reaching to all aspects of political strategy, is to break down this separation. The development of Russia is to be explained by the development of world capitalism and specifically, capitalist production in its most advanced stage, in the United States. Necessary for the strategic task of clarifying its own theory and for building an

irreconcilable opposition to Stalinism, it is not accidental that this method also is the open road for the revolutionary party to the socialism inherent in the minds and hearts, not only of the politically advanced but the most backward industrial workers in the United States.

It is for this reason that the analysis of the labour process in the United States must concern us first and only afterwards the labour process in Stalinist Russia.

## 2. The Mode of Labour in the United States

Roughly, we may attribute the decisive change in the American economy to the last part of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, taking 1914 as a convenient dividing line. After World War I the Taylor system, experimental before the war, becomes a social system, the factory laid out for continuous flow of production, and advanced planning for production, operating and control. At the same time there is the organization of professional societies, management courses in college curricula and responsible management consultants. Between 1924 and 1928 there is rationalization of production and retooling. (Ford)\*. Along with it are the tendencies to the scientific organization of production, to closer co-ordination between employers, fusion with each other against the working class, the intervention of the state as mediator and then as arbiter.

For the proletariat there is the constantly growing subdivision of labour, decrease in the need of skills, and determination of the sequence of operations and speed by the machine. The crisis of 1929 accelerated all these processes. The characteristic, most advanced form of American production becomes Ford. Here production consists of a mass of hounded, sweated labour (in which, in Marx's phrase, the very life of society was threatened); and opposed to it as a class, a management staff which can carry out this production only by means of a hired army (Bennett) of gangsters, thugs, supervisors who run production by terror, in the plant, in the lives of the workers outside production, and in the political control of Detroit. Ford's régime before unionization is the prototype of production relations in fascist Germany and Stalinist Russia.

But—and without this, *all* Marxism is lost—inextricably intertwined with the totalitarian *tendency* is the response of the working class. A whole new layer of workers, the result of the economic development, burst into revolt in the CIO. The CIO in its inception aimed at a revolution in production. The workers would examine what they were told to do and then decide whether it was satisfactory to them or not. This rejection of the basis of capitalist economy is the preliminary basis of a socialist economy. The next positive step is the total management of industry by the proletariat. Where the Transitional Programme



says that the "CIO is the most indisputable expression of the instinctive striving of the American workers to raise themselves to the level of the tasks imposed upon them by history", it is absolutely correct. The task imposed upon them by history is socialism and the outburst, in aim and method, was the first instinctive preparation of the social revolution.

Because it was not and could not be carried through to a conclusion, the inevitable counterpart was the creation of a labour bureaucracy. The history of production since is the corruption of the bureaucracy and its transformation into an instrument of capitalist production, the restoration to the bourgeoisie of what it had lost in 1936, the right to control production standards. Without this mediating role of the bureaucracy, production in the United States would be violently and continuously disrupted until one class was undisputed master.

The whole system is in mortal crisis from the reaction of the workers. Ford, whose father fought the union so uncompromisingly as late as 1941, now openly recognizes that as far as capitalism is concerned, improvements in technology, i.e., the further mechanization of labour, offers no road out for the increase of productivity which rests entirely with the working class. At the same time, the workers in relation to capitalism, resist any increase in productivity. The resistance to speed up does not necessarily mean as most think that workers are required to work beyond normal physical capacity. It is resistance by the workers to any increased productivity, i.e., any increase of productivity by capitalist methods. Thus, both sides, capital and labour, are animated by the fact that for each, in its own way, the system has reached its limit.

The real aim of the great strikes in 1946 and since is the attempt to begin on a higher stage what was initiated in 1936. But the attempt is crippled and deflected by the bureaucracy, with the result that rationalization of production, speed up, intensification of exploitation are the order of the day in industry.

The bureaucracy inevitably must substitute the struggle over consumption, higher wages, pensions, education, etc., for a struggle in production. This is the basis of the welfare state, the attempt to appease the workers with the fruits of labour when they seek satisfaction in the work itself. The bureaucracy must raise a new social programme in the realm of consumption because it cannot attack capitalism at the point of production without destroying capitalism itself.

The series of pension plans which have now culminated in the five-year contract with General Motors is a very sharp climax of the whole struggle. This particular type of increase in consumption subordinates the workers to production in a special manner after they have reached a certain age. It confines them to being an industrial

reserve army, not merely at the disposal of capital in general but within the confining limits of the specific capitalist factory which employs them. The effect, therefore, is to reinforce control both of employers and bureaucracy over production.

But along with this intensification of capitalist production and this binding of the worker for five years *must* go inevitably the increase of revolt, wildcat strikes, a desperate attempt of the working class to gain for itself conditions of labour that are denied to it both by the employers and the labour bureaucracy. While the bureaucracy provides the leadership for struggles over consumption, it is from the workers on the line that emerges the initiative for struggles over speed up. That is precisely why the bureaucracy, after vainly trying to stop wildcat strikes by prohibiting them in the contract, has now taken upon itself the task of repressing by force this interruption of production. It expels from the unions workers who indulge in these illegal stoppages, i.e., who protest against the present stage of capitalist production itself. The flying squads, originated by the union for struggle against the bourgeoisie, are now converted by the bureaucracy into a weapon of struggle against the proletariat, and all this in the name of a higher standard of living, greater consumption by the workers, but in reality to ensure capitalist production.

The increase of coercion and terror by the bureaucracy increases the tendency of the workers to violent explosion. This tendency, taken to its logical conclusion, as the workers will have to take it, means the reorganization of the whole system of production itself—socialism. Either this or the complete destruction of the union movement as the instrument of proletarian emancipation and its complete transformation into the only possible instrument of capital against the proletariat at this stage of production.

This is the fundamental function of the bureaucracy in *Russia*. Already the tentative philosophy of the bureaucracy in the United States, its political economy of regulation of wages and prices, nationalization and even planning, its ruthless political methods, show the organic similarity of the American labour bureaucracy and the Stalinists. The struggle in the United States reveals concretely what is involved in the Stalinist falsification of the Marxist theory of accumulation, etc., and the totalitarian violence against the proletariat which this falsification protects.

In the recent coal strikes, despite the wage and welfare gains of the miners, the heads of the operators declared that control of production had been restored to them by the two-year contract. C. E. Wilson, president of General Motors, hailed the five-year settlement as allowing the company "to run our own plants", and as "the union's

complete acceptance of technological progress". Reuther hailed the G.M. settlement as a "tremendous step forward" in "stabilizing labour relations at G.M.". An editor of *Fortune* magazine hailed the contract as the harbinger of "new and more meaningful associative principles" with the corporation as "the centre of a new kind of community".

The Stalinist bureaucracy is the American bureaucracy carried to its ultimate and logical conclusion; both of them products of capitalist production in the epoch of state-capitalism. To reply to this that the bureaucracy can never arrive at maturity without a proletarian revolution is the complete degradation of Marxist theory. Not a single Marxist of all the great Marxists who analysed state-capitalism, not one ever believed capitalism would reach the specific stage of complete centralization. It was because of the necessity to examine all its tendencies in order to be able to mobilize theoretical and practical opposition in the proletariat that they followed the dialectical method and *took these tendencies to their conclusions as an indispensable theoretical step*. In the present stage of our theory it is the scrupulous analysis of production in the United States as the most advanced stage of world capitalism that forms the indispensable prelude to the analysis of the labour process of Russia.

### 3. The Mode of Labour in Russia

The Russian Revolution of October, 1917, abolished feudalism with a thoroughness never before achieved. The stage was therefore set for a tremendous economic expansion. Lenin sought to mobilize the proletariat to protect itself from being overwhelmed by this economic expansion. The isolated proletariat of backward Russia was unable to do this. The subsequent history of the labour process of Russia is the telescopic re-enactment of the stages of the process of production of the United States; and, added to this, the special degradation imposed upon it by the totalitarian control of the bureaucracy and the plan.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 substituted for the authority of the capitalist in the factory the *workers' control of production*. Immediately there appeared *both* the concrete development of self-initiative in the factory *and* the simplification of the state apparatus outside. There was workers' control, with some capitalists as owners, but *mere* owners. Production conferences, not of bureaucrats but of workers, decided what and how to produce. What capitalists there remained seemed to vanish into thin air once their economic power was broken, and workers' control was supplemented the following year by nationalization of the means of production. The red thread that runs through these first years of workers' rule, workers' control, seems to suffer a setback under war

communism in general and with order 1042\* in particular. It takes less than a year for the workers to force a change, and the all-important trade union debate of 1920 follows. Lenin fights successfully both Trotsky, the administrator, and Shlapnikov, the syndico-anarchist, and strives to steer a course in consonance with the Declaration of the Rights of the Toilers, that only the masses "from below" can manage the economy, and that the trade unions are the transmission belts to the state wherein "every cook can be an administrator".

### **Stalinism in the Russian Factory**

In the transition period between 1924 and 1928 when the First Five Year Plan is initiated, the production conferences undergo a bureaucratization, and with it the form of labour. There begins the alienation of mass activity to conform to specified quantities of *abstract labour* demanded by the plan "to catch up with capitalism".

The results are:

(a) In 1929 ("The year of decision and transformation") there crystallizes in direct opposition to management by the masses "from below" the *conference of the planners*, the engineers, economists, administrators; in a word, the specialists.

(b) Stalin's famous talk of 1931 "put an end to depersonalization". His "six conditions" of labour contrasted the masses to the "personalized" individual who would outdo the *norms of the average*. Competition is not on the basis of creativity and Subbotniks,† but on the basis of the *outstanding* individual (read: bureaucrat) who will devise norms and have others surpass them.

(c) 1935 sees Stakhanovism and the definitive formation of an aristocracy of labour. Stakhanovism is the pure model of the manner in which foremen, overseers and leadermen are chosen in the factories the world over. These individuals, exceptional to their class, voluntarily devote an intensity of their labour to capital for a brief period, thus setting the norm, which they personify, to dominate the labour of the mass for an indefinite period.

With the Stakhanovites, the bureaucratic administrators acquire a social base, and alongside, there grows the instability and crisis in the economy. It is the counter-revolution of state-capital.

\*This was the order issued in the attempt to get the completely disorganized railroad system to function. The railroads were placed under almost military rule, subordinating the ordinary trade union democracy to "Chief Political Departments" which were established in the railway and water transport workers unions. As soon as the critical situation had been solved, the transport workers demanded the abolition of the "Chief Political Departments" and the immediate restoration of full trade union democracy.

†*Subbotniks* were the workers who on their own initiative volunteered to work five hours overtime on Saturdays without pay in order to help the economy of the workers' state. From the word, Subbota, meaning Saturday.

(d) Beginning with 1939 the mode of labour changes again. In his report on the Third Five Year Plan, Molotov stressed the fact that it was insufficient to be concerned merely with the mass of goods produced. The crucial point for "outstripping capitalism" was *not the mass* but the *rate* at which that mass was produced. It was necessary that *per capita* production be increased, that is to say, that each worker's productivity be so increased that fewer workers would be needed to obtain an ever greater mass of goods. Intensity of labour becomes the norm.

During the war that norm turned out to be the most vicious of all forms of exploitation. The Stalinists sanctified it by the name of "socialist emulation". "Socialist emulation" meant, firstly, that the pay incentive that was the due of a Stakhanovite was no longer the reward of the workers as individuals, once they *as a mass* produced according to the new raised norm. In other words, the take-home pay was the same despite the speed up on a plant-wide basis. Secondly, and above all, competition was no longer limited to individual workers competing on a piecework basis, nor even to groups of workers on a plant-wide basis, but was extended to cover *factory against factory*.

Labour Reserves are established to assure the perpetuation of skills and a sufficient labour supply. Youth are trained from the start *to labour as ordered*. The climax comes in 1943 with the "discovery" of the conveyor belt system. This is the year also of the Stalinist admission that the law of value functions in Russia.

We thus have:

1918: The Declaration of the Rights of Toilers—*every cook an administrator*.

1928: *Abstract mass labour*—"lots" of it "to catch up with capitalism".

1931: Differentiation within labour—"personalized" individual; the pieceworker the hero.

1935: Stakhanovism, *individual competition* to surpass the norm.

1936-37: Stalinist Constitution: Stakhanovites and the intelligentsia *singled out* as those "whom we respect".

1939-41: *Systematization* of piecework; factory competing against factory.

1943: "The year of the conversion to the conveyor belt system."

Whereas in 1936 we had the singling out of a ruling class, a "simple" division between mental and physical work, we now have the *stratification* of mental and physical labour. Leontiev's *Political Economy in the Soviet Union* lays stress not merely on the intelligentsia against the mass, but on specific skills and differentials, lower, higher, middle, in-between and highest.

If we take production since the Plan, not in the detail we have just given, but only the major changes, we can say that 1937 closes one period. It is the period of "catching up with and outdistancing capitalism" which means mass production and relatively simple planning. But competition on a world scale and the approaching Second World War is the severest type of capitalist competition for world mastery. This opens up the new period of *per capita* production as against mere "catching up". Planning must now include productivity of labour. Such planning knows and can know only machines and *intensity* of exploitation. Furthermore, it includes what the Russians call *rentabl'nost*, that is to say profitability. The era of the state helping the factory whose production is especially needed is over. The factory itself must prove its worthiness by showing a profit and a profit big enough to pay for "ever-expanded" production. And that can be done only by ever-expanded production of abstract labour in mass *and in rate*.

Nowhere in the world is labour so degraded as in Russia to-day. We are here many stages beyond the degradation which Marx described in the General Law of Accumulation. For not merely is the Russian labourer reduced to an appendage to a machine and a mere cog in the accumulation of capital. Marx said that the reserve army kept the working labourer riveted to his martyrdom. In Russia, because of the power to plan, the industrial reserve army is planned. Some 15 million labourers are planned in direct forced labour camps. They are organized by the MVD (GPU) for production. The disciplinary laws which began with reduction in wages for coming 15 minutes late have as their final stage, for lack of discipline, "corrective labour", i.e., the concentration camp.

What the American workers are revolting against since 1936 and holding at bay, this, and nothing else but this, has overwhelmed the Russian proletariat. The rulers of Russia perform the same functions as are performed by Ford, General Motors, the coal operators and their huge bureaucratic staffs. Capital is not Henry Ford; he can die and leave his whole empire to an institution; the plant, the scientific apparatus, the method, the personnel of organization and supervision, the social system which sets these up in opposition to the direct producer will remain. Not inefficiency of bureaucrats, not "prestige, powers and revenue of the bureaucracy", not consumption but capital accumulation in its specifically capitalist manner, this is the analysis of the Russian economy.

To think that the struggle in Russia is over consumption not only strikes at the whole theory of the relationship of the superstructure to the productive mechanism. In practice, to-day, the crisis in Russia is manifestly the crisis in production. Whoever is convinced that this whole problem is a problem of consumption is driven away from Marxism, not towards it.

#### 4. The Crisis of State-Capitalism

It was Marx's contention that the existence of a labouring force compelled to sell its labour-power in order to live meant automatically the system of capitalist accumulation. The capitalist was merely the agent of capital. The bureaucrats are the same. Neither can use nor knows any other mode of production. A new mode of production requires primarily that they be totally removed or totally subordinated.

At this point it is convenient to summarize briefly the abstract economic analysis of state-capitalism. We have never said that the economy of the United States is the *same* as the economy of Russia. What we have said is that, however great the differences, the fundamental laws of capitalism operate. It is just this that Marx indicated with his addition to *Capital* dealing with complete centralization of capital "in a given country".

"A given country" meant one specific country, i.e., the laws of the world-market still exist. If the whole world became centralized, then there would be a new society (for those who want it) since the *world-market* would have been destroyed. Although *completely centralized*, capital "in a given country" can plan, it cannot plan away the contradictions of capitalist production. If the *organic composition* of capital on a world-scale is 5 to 1, moving to 6 to 1, to 7 to 1, etc., centralized capital in a given country *has to keep pace with that*. The only way to escape it would be by a productivity of labour so great that it could keep ahead of the rest and still organize its production for use. Such a productivity of labour is impossible in capitalism which knows only the law of value and its consequence, accumulated labour and sweating proletarians. That is precisely why Engels wrote that though formally, i.e., abstractly, complete state-property could overcome the contradictions, actually it could not, the "workers remain proletarians". The whole long dispute between underconsumption and rate of profit theorists has now been definitively settled precisely by the experience of Russia.

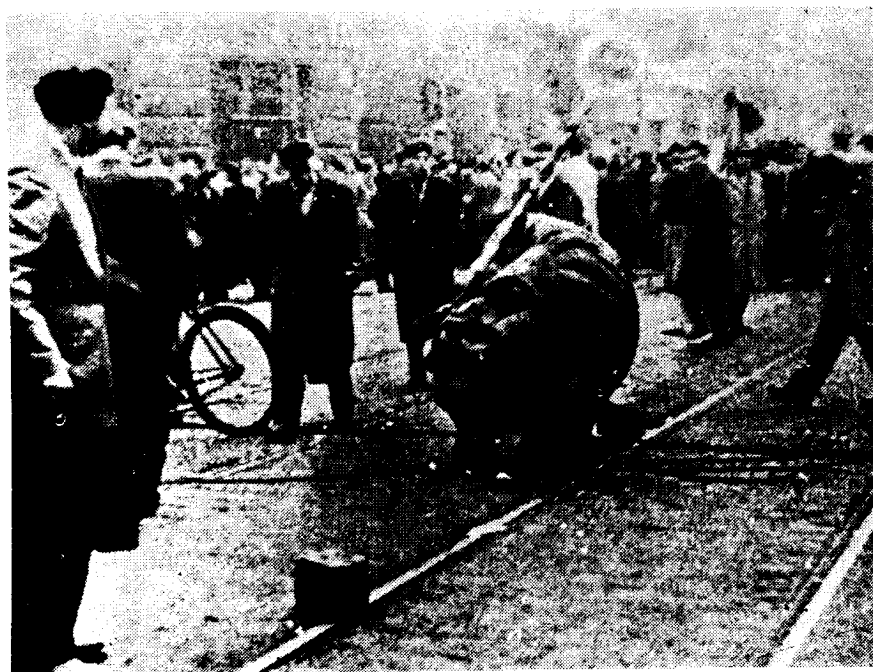
Lenin in 1917 repeated that state-capitalism without the Soviets meant "military penal labour" for the workers. The Soviet power was the road to socialism. The struggle in Russia and outside is the struggle against "military penal labour" and for the Soviet power. The revolt which gave birth to the CIO prevented American capital from transforming the whole of American production and society into the system which Ford and Bennett had established. This monstrous burden would have driven capital still further along the road of accumulation of capital, domination over the direct producer or accumulation of misery, lowered productivity, barbarism, paralysis and gangrene in all aspects of society. That was Germany. That would be the plan, the plan of capital,

and with state-property it is more free than before to plan its own ruin.

The totalitarian state in Russia prevents the workers from making their social and political experiences in open class struggle. But by so doing, it ensures the unchecked reign of capital, the ruin of production and society, and the inevitability of total revolution.

The decisive question is not whether centralization is complete or partial, heading toward completeness. The vital necessity of our time is to lay bare the violent antagonism of labour and capital at this definitive stage of centralization of capital. Whether democratic or totalitarian, both types of society are in permanent decline and insoluble crisis. Both are at a stage when only a total reorganization of social relations can lift society a stage higher.

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## Excerpt from: *Facing Reality* (1958)

There is no mystery in what is happening to our society. Men live their lives according to a philosophy of life. They always have. They always will. They may not be conscious of it. But when Roman Catholics and Protestants believed that it was their duty to convert, or, failing that, to exterminate each other, ideas were part of a total philosophy of life. Today Catholics and atheists can live peaceably side by side in the same house and are more concerned with whether their neighbors are Fascist or Communist, with which political party they belong to, than which Church they attend. Obviously the view of what constitutes the fundamentals of existence has changed. People do not need to be philosophers to have a philosophy of life.

Philosophers seek to formulate in precise and comprehensive terms the ideas of their age, or propagate new ideas, in whole or in part. All this would appear to be elementary. It has to be stated, however, because today the great stream of European philosophy has various evil-smelling stagnant pools or little streams that babble as aimlessly and far less usefully than Tennyson's brook. One of the stagnant schools has discovered that the organic constitution of the human mind is gloom, anxiety, dread, suffering, and all varieties of misery. The other begins from the premise that all previous philosophies misconceived language, and they have set out to make language more precise. For them a sentence which states "The future of humanity is in peril," has no meaning. This they demonstrate by devoting twenty pages to the word "the," forty pages to the word "future," and so on. A popular tradition has it that at the end of the great age of Catholicism the theologians debated with passion how many angels could dance on the point of a needle. Today they do not seem so absurd in the light of the number of professors who can dance on the needle of a point. In this way, inquiring youth is corrupted and shepherded into passivity before the crimes and evils of the day.

These learned obscurantists and wasters of paper are of value in that they signify the end of a whole stage in the intellectual history of mankind. Philosophy as such has come to an end.

From Plato to Hegel, European philosophers were

always struggling to make a total harmonious unity of societies riddled by class struggles. They were attempting the impossible, organizing in the mind what could only be organized in society. But contrary to these modern marionettes, they usually cleared away much that had become old and rotten and at least formulated the new. But the time for that is past. The development of science and industry has brought men face to face with the need to make reasonable their daily existence, not to seek in philosophical systems for the harmony that eludes them in life. Over a hundred years ago in one of his greatest passages, Marx saw that religious and philosophical systems had had their day, and men would soon face the realities of social life as phenomena created by human beings, to be organized by human beings in concrete life, and not in the escapism of abstract thought or the mystic symbolism of religious ceremonial. This intellectual clarification had been achieved not by intellectuals but by bourgeois society itself. So in the Communist Manifesto Marx pointed out that in good time men would face the world as it was and therefore have no need of a philosophy to resolve its contradictions. The socialist proletariat would reorganize society.

Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

Philosophy must become proletarian—this stinging formulation is the source of jeers and sneers or polite smirks by the philosophically educated. It is nevertheless one of the great truths of our time. Immense numbers of the educated, now compelled at last to face with sober senses the real conditions of life and their real relations with their kind, fly off in all directions, philosophies of anxiety, dizzy gyrations on the meaning of the word "meaning," rediscovering original sin, diving into the depths of the human personality armed with torchlights made by Freud and Jung, accumulating statistics in the spirit of Mr. Gallup and labeling it sociology.

Though confused and deafened by the clamor above, it is the working class in every country more than any other class which faces very soberly the conditions of life as they are today and knows that the future of

human experience lies in the reorganization of these conditions and not in dread, depth psychology, or the ineradicable sense of sin. For the same reason, language is today more than ever adequate for the expression of human needs. This is not because language is more highly developed, but because human needs have become more simplified. With modern means of communication, there is not an urgent social problem today which is beyond the rapid comprehension of the vast majority of mankind. Since the Greek city-state, it is the first time in history that this is possible. There is no mystery in what is happening to our society. If so many find it easier to accept the total destruction of human society rather than see that a new society is all around them, a society based on cooperative labor, it is not merely because of greed, desire to retain privilege, original sin. It is because, arising out of these material privileges and re-enforcing them is a habit of mind, a way of viewing the world, a philosophy of life still so powerful because by means of it man has conquered nature. It has governed the world for over four hundred years and now it has come to an end.

Beginning in the Sixteenth Century, mankind liberated itself from the static closed conceptions of the universe which had characterized the medieval epoch. The study of science and the revolutionizing of production which had grown up within feudal society opened up the perspective of conquering nature and subjecting it to human control. Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Columbus, and Shakespeare are some of the symbols of the new age. For us today, the most significant is Descartes.

To a society advancing in science and industry, Descartes gave a philosophy that expressed and released the readiness to adventure in every realm, including the realm of ideas. His philosophy was imbued with the conviction that every discovery contributed to the liberation of humanity. It inculcated freedom from national prejudice for all thinking men. This philosophy bore its name on its face—rationalism. "I think, therefore I am," said Descartes, and the world rejoiced at the perspective of the expansion of individual personality and human powers through the liberation of the intellect. This resting of self-certainty on man's own thought, and man's thought alone, was a revolutionary defiance of the medieval dogma which had derived certainty of self from God or the Church. Rationalism encouraged and developed an elite, the organizers of ideas, the organizers of industry, the discoverers in science. At that stage of human development they were needed. They cultivated the individual personality. It followed that they looked upon the masses of men as passive unthinking servants of the active organizing elite. Rationalism saw each human being as an individual, the natural leaders being the most able, the most energetic, the

most far-seeing individuals. Its political form, as developed by Locke, if only as an ideal, was democracy, the transference of free individual competition into politics. It was invaluable in the conquest of nature, and under its banner reaction was driven steadily back and the modern world was created.

Today the tasks envisaged by Descartes, the great men of the Sixteenth Century and their followers in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth, are accomplished. The pressing need of society is no longer to conquer nature. The great and pressing need is to control, order, and reduce to human usefulness the mass of wealth and knowledge which has accumulated over the last four centuries. In human, in social terms, the problem of mankind has gone beyond the association of men in a natural environment to achieve control over nature. Today mankind is sharply divided into two camps within the social environment of production, the elite and the mass. But the trained, educated elite no longer represents the liberation of mankind. Its primary function is to suppress the social community which has developed inside the process of production. The elite must suppress the new social community because this community is today ready to control, order, and reduce to human usefulness the mass of accumulated wealth and knowledge. This antagonistic relation between an administrative elite calculating and administering the needs of others, and people in a social community determining their own needs, this new world, our world, is a world which Descartes never knew or guessed at. As an actual liberating philosophy of life, rationalism is dead. It is rationalism which no longer commands the allegiance of men.

Yet on both sides of the Iron Curtain, it is rationalism which still rules. Stalinist totalitarianism is merely the material expression of the elite philosophy of rationalism carried to its ultimate conclusion. Its philosophy of the Party is the philosophy of the organized elite, Its philosophy of the Plan is the philosophy of the organizing intellect. It is the attempt to take what was living, creative, dynamic, adventurous in the early days of science and industry and make it into a blueprint to regulate the infinitely complex life of modern society. Its conception of the masses of the people is that they are the means by whose labor and sacrifice are to be achieved ends which only the elite can visualize clearly. Hence the blindness, the moral degradation, the dehumanization which overtakes those who today practice the philosophy of rationalism. Two philosophies, the philosophy of man's mastery over men and the philosophy of man's mastery over things, have met face to face.

Fascism, Corporate State, One-Party State, Welfare State, Totalitarianism, all of these are ways in which rationalism attempts to adapt itself to the modern community. Thereby it not only obstructs the new so-

ciety. It destroys all the achievements of rationalism itself. The free development of the individual personality, the right of the meanest intelligence to wander through the strangest seas of thought, alone if need be, this freedom has been established as a universal principle, however limited it might be by the actual conditions of existence at any particular place or time. It is now an ineradicable part of the human personality. The new society, the community of cooperative labor, can function adequately only if this freedom can expand to its fullest degree. Today rationalism destroys it, not only for the mass, but for the elite itself. So Hitler and Stalin become the sole individuals in their countries entitled to any personality at all. Political parties in parliamentary democracies become machines in which the individual must either conform or be ruthlessly eliminated. Human associations no longer are guided by leadership, they pay homage to "the leader." That is why "on both sides of the Curtain—and rapidly developing in Asia and Africa—modern urban, industrial (or industrializing) society renders its citizens ever more rootless in their local habitations, ever more mobile, ever more atomistic. They do not feel their society. They do not seem parts of it." But a society of Workers Councils in every department of the national life, and a Government of Workers Councils? Ah! That, if you please, will mean—the destruction of culture. As if for fifty years official society has not been systematically destroying culture in its most precious castle—the mind of man. Sometimes some scrap of reality appears for a brief moment among the perpetual stupidity, lies, hypocrisy and self-delusion which the daily Press mechanically places before even its most pretentious customers. Thus the London Times for April 18th, 1957, suddenly informs its readers:

It is, for example, being widely said that the political and industrial conflicts in contemporary Britain arise from the fact that two fundamentally opposite moralities, a bourgeois morality and a collective morality, are flourishing side by side and that their respective adherents find it increasingly hard to discover a common basis for discussion.

It is a peculiar idea that both these societies are "flourishing." Let that pass.

There they are, the two societies. But we read on and it turns out that the bourgeois morality is—Christianity. "Conservative Freedom Pays;" a Prime Minister in the House of Commons, twisting and cheating like a racing tout in the dock, when asked if American planes loaded with hydrogen bombs are flying over England; employers straining like greyhounds on the leash for a government signal to have the showdown with the workers; professors sitting up late over Jung to find reasons why royalty is part of the collective unconscious (British), this is capitalistic society? No such thing. It is Christianity, and the Archbishop of Canterbury is its prophet.

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### III. THE CARIBBEAN

#### The Making of the Caribbean People (1966)

This evening I am to speak on *The Making of the Caribbean People*, a people in my opinion unique in the modern world. That is the theme which I will develop. I know nobody like them, nobody like us, both positively and negatively. I'll tell you how I will treat such a tremendous subject. I will begin by stating the kind of opinions that educated people, and well-meaning progressive people, have of us, the Caribbean people. Naturally, on such a wide subject, in such a limited time, I will have to be quite precise in the quotations that I give. They are chosen because they have more than passing value. When I have stated what is the general opinion, I shall then proceed to state my own, which is utterly and completely opposed to the opinions held by most educated people, West Indians and non-West Indians. I will do that by going into history and sociology of the West Indian at the beginning of their entry into modern western society. I shall concentrate to a large degree on what took place between 1600 and 1800. When I have established that, then I will move more rapidly through our history and what has been happening since. But I will depend on what has been established in the early part, to be able to move rapidly and easily into matters which are more familiar to us.

First of all then: what is the general opinion held about us by people who are West Indians or who are interested in the West Indies?

I will begin with a quotation from the Moyne Report. A number of excellent English gentlemen and ladies, of broad views, sympathetic to the West Indies, who were sent there by King George V in 1938 on a Royal Commission. They wrote a report which is one of the foremost reports that has ever been made about the West Indies.<sup>1</sup> They were not hostile to the West Indies. They were merely profoundly ignorant of what they were dealing with. Here is a quotation from that report,

Negroes were taken from lands where they lived no doubt in a primitive state.

I don't know where they got that from, because the early Portuguese and the rest who discovered Africa did not find very much difference between the Negro civilizations they met and the great masses of the peasantry they had left at home. In many respects many Africans were more advanced. These Commissioners writing the report took for granted that all Africans lived in Africa in a primitive state—but Africans lived in social conditions and were

subject to customs and usages which, anthropology increasingly shows, had definite social, economic and cultural value. Well, at any rate, that is much better than what they used to teach twenty or thirty years ago.

The report goes on to say that "their transfer to the West Indies unlike most other large-scale movements of population, did not involve the transfer of any important traces of their traditions and customs, but rather their almost complete destruction." Now it is impossible to produce a sentence that contains more mistakes and more gross misunderstandings and misrepresentations.

The Negroes who came from Africa brought themselves. The Amer-Indians could not stand the impact of slavery. Chinese came afterwards and couldn't make it: they couldn't do the work. The Europeans tried Portuguese labourers: they were not successful. People of African descent, the African from Africa, made the perpetuation of western civilisation possible in the West Indies. The report says that they left everything behind. But the Africans themselves are the most important and most valuable representatives of their civilisation—that when they came here they brought themselves, something of primary importance, never seems to come to the mind of all these people who write reports.

Now they go on to say that "the Negroes had one function only, the provision of cheap labour on the estates owned and managed by Europeans for the production of their valuable export crops. They lost their language, customs and religions, and no systematic attempt was made to substitute any other." They lost their language, yes. But they rapidly mastered the English, the French and the Spanish languages.

So if they lost their language it is necessary to say they had to learn new ones and they learnt them very well. They could do that being the people that they were.

Now this Moyné report is the opinion of a whole body of MPs of various disciplines, and various other persons. These things left their mark—we had been inhumanly treated, as the "primitives" we were. We continued to be.

The coming of emancipation gave a strong, if temporary, impetus to such forces as were working for the betterment of the Negro population: Churches and their attempt to teach Negroes Christianity, to read and to write, and to improve their morals so that they shouldn't have so many illegitimate children. That was a primary conception for the betterment of the Negro. I hope before I have concluded to show you how superficial, how entirely false, was this estimate of Negro morals and capability.

Now I want to add to that a statement by no less a person than Professor Arthur Lewis. You will find it in a pamphlet that I have published in Trinidad. It is a statement made to an economic conference<sup>2</sup> which he addresses as follows: The professors of economics, the economists—so says Professor Lewis—do not know much more on development than the ordinary person does. Economic development depends on saving some of what you have now, in order to improve yourself later. He says, that is all there is to it, there is no special economic theory or economic knowledge required. He says that what is required is the effort and readiness to sacrifice by the great part of the population. And, he concludes, people don't know whether the population, the West Indian population, will make that effort or not. He more than implies that it is a question of doubt as to whether the West Indian population has got that necessary feeling, that impetus to make the sacrifices necessary, for the development of the West Indian economy.

I want to dissociate myself completely from Professor Lewis's view. I have never found that West Indians, when called upon in a critical situation, do not respond. That is their life: I believe that they can't help responding. Beginning as we do in a new civilisation and leaving such elements that they might have brought with them behind, they have always responded to a funda-

mental and serious challenge. That has been our way of life. That is why we are still alive. What has happened to us is that economic and social forces are sitting upon our backs and preventing us from developing ourselves in vital spheres. Where we have had an opportunity to work freely, there we have shown great distinction. Where we have not shown it is because we have been prevented. It is not the lack of capacity. I want you to understand that. I strongly remove myself from the view expressed by Professor Lewis that it depends on us whether we shall rise to the occasion. If those on our backs get off our backs, we shall be able to rise: we have done pretty well with the burdens that we have always carried and are still carrying.

This whole business consists of criticisms and doubts of a "primitive" people. We began with nothing, and have learned a great deal but we still have a lot to learn! That is not my view of the West Indian. I think that we have learned all that was possible for us to have learned. We have learned far more than other people in similar situations have learned. The difficulties that we have met with, that stood in our way, were difficulties of a breadth and weight which would have crushed a people of less power and less understanding of the fact that we had to do all we could to get somewhere.

### AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

Now I want to begin with Lygon's *History of Barbados*. It was written in 1653. You can't begin much earlier. He had been in Barbados up to 1647. The island was populated by Englishmen in the 1620's, and Lygon says that at the beginning, or very soon after, there were eleven thousand white peasant farmers in Barbados. They were on their way to becoming what New England in the United States became later.

But then came the sugar plantations and the Negroes were brought in order to work on the sugar plantations. That was somewhere between 1640 or thereabouts, and Lygon gives this account of what happened to the Negroes who at that time had not been in Barbados more than about 10 years. I will give a full account of what he says. Don't think it's a little long: it is very important and means a great deal for our future understanding of the whole 300 years of *West Indian history* that follows it.

I want to interpolate here that I fully agree with Gilberto Freyre that the African who made the Middle Passage and came to live in the West Indies was an entirely new historical and social category. He was not an African, he was a West Indian black who was a slave. And there had never been a people like that before and there haven't been any since. And what I shall make clear is the uniqueness of our history and the unique developments which have resulted.

Back now to Lygon:

A little before I came thence, there was such a combination amongst them, as the like was never seen there before. Their sufferings being grown to the great height, and their daily complainings to one another (of the intolerable burdens they labour'd under) being spread throughout the Iland; at the last, some amongst them, whose spirits were not able to endure such slavery, resolved to break through it, or die in the act; and so conspired with some others of their acquaintance, whose sufferings were equal, if not above theirs: and their spirits no way inferiour, resolved to draw as many of the discontented party into this plot, as possible they could; and those of this perswasion, were the greatest number of servants in the Iland. So that a day was appointed to fall upon their Masters, and cut all their throats, and by that means, to make themselves not only freemen, but Masters of the Iland.

Now that is the very beginning (and the continuation) of West Indian history. They wanted not only their freedom but to remove their masters and make themselves masters of the island. That is what happened essentially in



San Domingo about 150 years afterwards and that is what happened in Cuba in 1958. They got rid of their masters and made themselves masters of the island. Masters isn't exactly the same as Lygon's statement but if I may quote a resilient lawyer: "The principle is the same."

I believe the above to be characteristic of the West Indies and our history. When West Indians reach a certain stage they wish to make a complete change and that is because all of us come from abroad. Liberty means something to us that is very unusual. There were many generations of slaves in Africa, of that we are quite sure. And in Africa they took it and no doubt fought against it at certain times. But when we made the Middle Passage and came to the Caribbean we went straight into a modern industry—the sugar plantation—and there we saw that to be a slave was the result of our being black. A white man was not a slave. The West Indian slave was not accustomed to that kind of slavery in Africa; and therefore in the history of the West Indies there is one dominant fact and that is the desire, sometimes expressed, sometimes unexpressed, but always there, the desire for liberty; the ridding oneself of the particular burden which is the special inheritance of the black skin.

*If you don't know that about West Indian people you know nothing about them.*

They have been the most rebellious people in history and that is the reason. It is because being a black man he was made a slave, and the white man, whatever his limitations, was a free subject, a man able to do what he could in the community. That is the history of the West Indies. No hint of that appears in the report of Lord Moyne and if we read any number, not only of government reports but works of economists and historians, some of them West Indians, they have no conception whatever of the people they are dealing with and where we are headed.

To go on with Lygon:

And so closely was this plot carried, as no discovery was made, till the day before they were to put in in act: And then one of them, either by the failing of his courage, or some new obligation from the love of his Master, revealed this long plotted conspiracy; and so by this timely advertisement, the Masters were saved. Justice Hethersall (whose servant this was) sending letters to all his friends, and they to theirs, and so to one another, till they were all secured; and by examination, found out the greatest part of them.

## THE HOUSE SLAVE

Now it is interesting to note that this fellow who betrayed the plot was working with a justice, Justice Hethersall. Whether he loved his master or some other reason (that is a matter for the psychologists). I don't know. What I think, what I suspect, is that working in the house of a Justice of the Peace, he had acquired a certain respect, a subservience to the conceptions of law and order of the masters of the society which he had just entered. And I say that because we shall see this type constantly reappearing, it is most prominent in West Indian society today: the house-slave. A man is a part of the mass of the population; the mass of the population moves in a certain direction, and for some reason or other, he goes and betrays the cause. We have that West Indian pattern of betrayal from the very beginning.

Lygon continues:

... whereof eighteen of the principal men in the conspiracy, and they were the first leaders and contrivers of the plot, were put to death, for example to the rest. And the reason why they made examples of so many, was, they found these so haughty in their resolutions, and so incorrigible, as they were like enough to become actors in a second plot; and so they thought good, to secure them; and for the rest, to have a special eye over them.

Now there in sharp outline at the very beginning is the history of the West

Indies. After barely ten years they all of them are knit together not merely by the common bond of colour but far more by a common oppression. They have the majority of people in the island. (I feel fairly certain that it was the sugar plantation and working in it that gave them this possibility. I don't believe they would have been able to organise themselves so well and so clearly in Africa. *That is not important.*) Anyway this thing is planned. Then this person working with Justice Hethersall betrays. He goes and he tells his masters what amounts to: "I am with you, not with them, that is what they are plotting to do."

That is permanent in the history of the West Indies and we shall see that as we go on. Note how the leaders who are caught are incorrigible, they are absolutely determined not to give way in the slightest respect: they have to be executed, all of them, because that is the only way in which their masters could feel safe for the future. That is the history we ought to teach in our schools. That is *our* history, *West Indian history*.

Now why I've chosen that is because I believe that it is symbolical of the whole of West Indian history and as I go on, especially when I come to my special study, *The Black Jacobins*, I shall go into that in some detail. Some of you may believe that you have read the book. I did more than that, I wrote it. But it is only in late years that I am able to understand and to appreciate the full significance of what I wrote in that book. We shall go into that in time.

## SLAVES RAN THE PLANTATIONS

Now I want to move to another feature which is not understood by these numerous West Indian economists, sociologists, historians and writers. This which I hold up before you is a work called *Merchants and Planters* by Richard Pares. He is one of the greatest West Indian scholars, a scholar in that he has done a lot of studies and is a man of great learning. (He has not written one book and gone about claiming to be a scholar.) *Merchants and Planters* is a study of the Caribbean and was published for the Economic History Society at the Cambridge University Press. Pares notes that

... in all the inventories which are to be found among the West Indian archives it is very usual for the mill, the cauldron, the still and the buildings to count for more than one-sixth of the total capital; in most plantations one-tenth would be nearer the mark. By far the greatest capital items were the value of the slaves and the acreage planted in canes by their previous labour.

So that the greatest capital value (this is about 1760) of the sugar plantation, was the labour of the slaves and the acres they had planted. All sorts of economists do all sorts of studies about the West Indies but they don't know that. They write little studies how this was worth that and that was worth this, and this was worth the other. But the real value of those economic units was the slaves and the land they had developed by their labour, this escapes nearly all except this English scholar.

Pares goes on to say:

Yet, when we look closely, we find that the industrial capital required was much larger than a sixth of the total value. With the mill, the boiling house and the still went an army of specialists—almost all of them slaves, but none the less specialists for that.

If you take little away from this meeting and you take that, you will have done well.

There was an army of slaves, but he says they were specialists; they were slaves it is true, but nevertheless they were specialists. That is very hard to grasp. Try hard. This tremendous economy that made so much wealth particularly for British society—it was the slaves who ran those plantations.

Note that you get what Pares is saying: the statisticians never write down what was the real value of the important industrial capital of the plantations. And he says, . . . this is terrific:

They were not only numerous but, because of their skill, they had a high value. If we add their cost to that of the instruments and machinery which they used, we find that the industrial capital of the plantations, without which it could not be a plantation at all, was probably not much less than half its total capital.

I hope there are some economists here who have done research in this field, who will stand up and take part in the discussion; about what they have written, or to be more precise, what they have not written.

It takes an Englishman to write this. And here let me, in advance, correct a misunderstanding very prevalent today. I denounce European colonialist scholarship. But I respect the learning and the profound discoveries of Western Civilisation. It is by means of the work of the great men of Ancient Greece; of Michelet, the French historian; of Hegel, Marx and Lenin; of Du Bois; of contemporary Europeans and Englishmen like Pares and E.P. Thompson; of an African like the late Chisaza, that my eyes and ears have been opened and I can today see and hear what we were, what we are, and what we can be, in other words—the Making of the Caribbean People.

Pares goes on to say:

. . . but when we examine specifications of the Negroes, we find so many boilers, masons, carters, boatswains of the mill, etc., that we cannot feel much confidence in our categories, especially when we find individuals described as "excellent boiler and field negro . . ."

So that about 1766 Negroes ran the plantations. That is what this scholar is saying. A man is described as excellent boiler and field Negro, this prevents us from putting such persons on either side of the line. He not only worked in the fields but he also did the necessary technical work. Further complication arises from the fact that specialist jobs were awarded to the sickly and the ruptured. The sickly or the ruptured were given the technical jobs to do—note the spread of technical skill.

That gave me, and I had read it elsewhere, an entirely different picture of the kind of civilisation that was in existence in the West Indies well before the French Revolution of 1789. I have found other evidence elsewhere and it seems to me that they, the slaves, ran that society; they were the persons responsible. If they had been removed the society would have collapsed. That is perfectly clear in certain writings about Trinidad and Tobago. But the West Indian economists, the West Indian sociologists, the West Indian historians; they write but I have never met any one of them who understood that, and I would be very glad if either here, or if you feel shamed about it, in private, you will let me know, one or two of you, why this had to be done by an Englishman, an English scholar. I want to put it as sharply as possible. Slaves ran the plantations; those tremendous plantations, the great source of wealth of so many English aristocrats and merchants, the merchant princes who cut such a figure in English society (and French too, but we are speaking of English society). Those plantations were run by the slaves. That is what Pares is saying. Slave labour was not an advanced stage of labour, but those plantations created millions and from top to bottom slaves ran them.

And now we are able to understand one of the greatest events in the history of the West Indian people which I will now spend some time upon in the light of what we have said of the earlier part. It will deal with the San Domingo Revolution.

## THE BLACK JACOBINS

I wrote the book, *The Black Jacobins*. I studied that society very closely but it is only of late years with my acquaintance with the West Indian people and actual contact with them, political and in some degree sociological, that I have learned to understand what I wrote in this book. And I have learned to understand it because as I read educated persons writing about the West Indies, it becomes clear that they have no understanding whatever of the West Indian people.

I will take an excerpt here and there and spend a word or two on each, but I prefer to deal with the extracts themselves. The first one is from Fortescue, the historian of the British Army. And Fortescue writes what happened to the British expedition to San Domingo in 1792. This is the sentence I want you to bear in mind. This was the war in which England was fighting for its life against revolutionary France. And Fortescue says,

The secret of England's impotence for this first six years of the war may be said to lie in two fatal words—San Domingo.

Fortescue puts the blame on Pitt and Dundas,

who had full warning that on this occasion they would have to fight not only poor, sickly Frenchmen, but the Negro population of the West Indies. Yet they poured their troops into these pestilent islands, in the expectation that thereby they would destroy the power of France, only to discover, when it was too late, that they had practically destroyed the British Army.

Now I have done some teaching, a great deal of teaching: I was a member of that noble army of martyrs for 12 years and I have met many students who knew all about the Battle of Hastings, the Battle of Waterloo, the Battle of the Great Armada. Some of them were pretty bright on Blank in the Battle of Blank, but that the British Army was destroyed by slaves in San Domingo, and England was impotent for the first six years of the greatest war in history up to 1914, they simply don't know anything about that. I wonder how many of you know that. I wouldn't press it any further.

Now an important thing is that the slaves worked collectively on the sugar plantation and I am going to read a statement now which shows what that had made of them.

A few years after the revolution began (it began in 1791 and this is about 1796), a French official Roume notes the change in the people.

In the North (that is where the great sugar plantations were, in the great North plain) they came out to sustain royalty, nobility and religion against the poor whites and the Patriots. But they were soon formed into regiments and were hardened by fighting. They organised themselves into armed sections and into popular bodies, and even while fighting for royalty they adopted instinctively and rigidly observed all the forms of republican organisation.

This is in 1796, only five years after the revolt.

Slogans and rallying cries were established between the chiefs of the sections and divisions and gave them points of contact from one extremity of the plains and towns of the North to the other.

Over one-third of the island of San Domingo. This was not a few, but the mass.

This guaranteed the leaders a means of calling out the labourers and sending them back at will. These forms were extended to the districts in the West Province, and were faithfully observed by the black labourers, whether fighting for Spain and royalty or for the republic, Roume assured Bonaparte that he recognised these slogans, even during the insurrection which forced him to authorise the taking of Spanish San Domingo.

This was some years afterwards.

Now I wonder what conclusions you draw from this self-mobilisation and self-discipline of a West Indian population. The conclusion I draw is the absolute impertinence and stupidity of a Colonial Office, which, as late as 1950, was wondering whether the people of Trinidad should have freedom or not, or whether they should have five members or more in the Legislature or how many in the Executive; playing a game of checkers they put one member and they see how it goes; then they put two and wait a bit; and they put another one, but he did not do so well so they take him away. And that is the kind of business, that is what they were doing, they said, to train the people for democracy. But look at our people in 1796. They were illiterate: Toussaint used to say two-thirds of them had made the Middle Passage and could not speak a word of French. They knew a few words of patois. But they worked on sugar plantations. They were masters of the technical necessities of the plantation, and when the time came they were able to organise themselves over the whole of the North Plain, and their leaders could call them out and send them back home merely by the use of political slogans.

Any population which could act in this way while only a few years from slavery was fitted for full parliamentary democracy 150 years afterwards.

British Colonial officials have understood nothing about the development of colonial peoples. They have stood in the way of their forward movement from colonial status to freedom. The people who understand this had to go to jail. Gandhi and Nehru went to jail for any number of years. Nkrumah went to jail. Dr. Hastings Banda went to jail. Nyerere went to jail. All of them, and that priest from Cyprus, he went to jail also.

So you notice that they didn't learn about democracy in British schools, they learnt it in the jails into which the British had put them; and from those jails they taught the population and taught the Colonial Office what were the realities of independence.

I don't mind what nonsense the British historians and economists write. But our writers; our West Indian writer; he is the man I am concerned with. He does not seem to understand anything of what I am saying to you here.

Toussaint, about 1801 or 1802, came to a conception for which the only word is genius. He wrote a Constitution for San Domingo and he didn't submit it to the French Government. He declared in the Constitution that San Domingo would be governed by the ex-slaves. French officials asked him: what is the place of the French Government in this Constitution? He replied, "They will send commissioners to talk with me"—and that was all he would say.

His plan was absolute local independence on the one hand, but on the other hand French capital and French commissioners to establish the relation. He begged them to help him develop and educate the country, and to *send a high official from France as a link between both governments. The local power was too well safe-guarded for us to call it a protectorate.* All the evidence shows that Toussaint, working alone, had reached forward to that form of political relation which we know today as dominion status. This was forty years before the famous report on Canada, forty years before the Durham report. Toussaint said, we must have absolute independence but we admit the sovereignty of France; France must send educators, officials, and a commissioner who will speak with me. In this political proposal he was far beyond politicians and officials of the time. This point they were only to reach in 1932 at Ottawa, then they accepted the complete independence of the colonies, with a High Commissioner to speak with the local governments of Canada, of Australia, etc. Over and over again I am aware in these early days of struggles by these early West Indians, that they laid down lines which could be followed without too much difficulty by their descendants, but for the obstacle of their political education by the Colonial Office. (Toussaint knew and introduced a literacy campaign.)

You may think that Toussaint L'Ouverture was an exceptional person. So he was. But you will see the same tremendous spirit, energy and political creativeness in Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, Frantz Fanon, and other West Indians shall we say "too numerous to mention" or "too near to home?" That is the breed. Until the Colonial Office gets hold of us to educate us.

But listen to this typically West Indian passage. It is about Toussaint again. I quote from *The Black Jacobins*.

Firm as was his grasp of reality, old Toussaint looked beyond San Domingo with a boldness of imagination surpassed by no contemporary. In the Constitution he authorised the slave-trade because the island needed people to cultivate it. When the Africans landed, however, they would be free men. But while loaded with the cares of government, he cherished a project of sailing to Africa with arms, ammunition and a thousand of his best soldiers, and there conquering vast tracts of country, putting an end to the slave-trade, and making millions of blacks "free and French," as his Constitution had made the blacks of San Domingo. It was no dream. He had sent millions of francs to America to wait for the day when he would be ready. He was already 55. What spirit was it that moved him? Ideas do not fall from heaven. The great revolution had propelled him out of his humble joys and obscure destiny, and the trumpets of its heroic period rang ever in his ears. In him, born a slave and the leader of slaves, the concrete realisation of liberty, equality and fraternity was the womb of ideas and the springs of power, which overflowed their narrow environment and embraced the whole of the world. But for the revolution, this extraordinary man and his band of gifted associates would have lived their lives as slaves, serving the commonplace creatures who owned them, standing barefooted and in rags to watch inflated little governors and mediocre officials from Europe pass by, as many a talented African stands in Africa today.

That was Toussaint, the West Indian, who having established a base at home showed himself the ancestor of Garvey, Padmore and Fanon. They had to go abroad to develop their West Indian characteristics. One West Indian who did not have to go abroad to carry out his West Indian ideas was the one who had built himself a base at home—Fidel Castro.

Let me repeat the end of that quotation:

But for the revolution, this extraordinary man and his band of gifted associates who had lived their lives as slaves, serving the commonplace creatures who owned them, standing barefooted and in rags to watch inflated little governors and mediocre officials from Europe pass by as many a talented African stands in Africa today.

I wrote that in 1938. I am very proud of it. There were not many people thinking in those terms as far back as 1938. There are not enough who are thinking in those terms today.

Let us go on with these extraordinary people, these West Indians. They won their freedom in 1803. Up to 1791 they had been slaves. All this was done within 12 years. They defeated a Spanish Army of some 50,000 soldiers, a British Army of 60,000 soldiers, and another 60,000 Frenchmen sent by Bonaparte to re-establish slavery. They fought Bonaparte's great army and drove it off their land.

## WEST INDIAN RULERS

Now for the making of our people since these glorious and creative days. Some of you, I have no doubt, are profoundly aware of the savage ferocity of some of the West Indian rulers today to the populations who have put them in power. In 1966, this is appearing in island after island in the Caribbean. What we have to do is to see the origin of this, its early appearance at the very moment when freedom was won. That will give us the historic fact and the

historic origins of the fact. I shall confine myself to the period after Toussaint had been captured and sent away, and General Leclerc has been compelled to employ the Negro generals as members of his staff to help keep "order." Then the news came that the old colonial regime, slavery and Mulatto discrimination, had been restored in Guadeloupe. The insurrection among the mass of the population in San Domingo became general.

What we have to do now is to see first the behaviour of the mass of the population, the rank and file, the man in the street, the ordinary peasant, the agricultural labourer. And on the other hand, the behaviour of those who, formerly slaves, had now become generals, high officials, and members of the governing body.

This is how the masses behave. The masses from whom the masses of today (and some of us here) are descended. Back to *The Black Jacobins*:

With a skill and tenacity which astonished their seasoned opponents, the little local leaders not only beat off attacks but maintained a ceaseless harrying of the French posts, giving them no peace, so that the soldiers were worn out and nerve-wracked, and fell in thousands to the yellow fever. When the French sent large expeditions against them they disappeared in the mountains, leaving a trail of flames behind them, returning when the weary French retreated, to destroy still more plantations and carry their attacks into the French lines. Running short of ammunition, the labourers in the mountains around Port-de-Paix attacked this important town, drove out the garrison, killed the whites, burned the houses that had been rebuilt, and took possession of the fort with 25,000 pounds of powder. Who comes to capture it? Maurepas, who had commanded in the district and had so valiantly driven off the attacks of Humbert, Debelle and Hardy. He and the French, with a vigorous counterattack, recaptured the fort, but "the insurgents with incredible activity . . . men, women, and children, all had got back to the mountains more or less heavily laden." The masses of the North plain ran to put themselves under the guidance of these new leaders.

Now we leave these heroic people and will go straight on to what I call the old gang, those who had become generals, administrators and part of the new government. They would not join the new revolution, but joined with the French government to suppress the revolutionaries. They had become house-slaves of the most subservient kind. Here is what I had to write immediately after that last passage describing the heroism of the mass:

All that old gang would do was to threaten Leclerc. Some of the blacks who had been slaves attempted to purchase their freedom from their former masters. These refused and singled out as their private property high officials and officers, men who had shed their blood on the battlefield and served with distinction in the administration. Christophe told General Ramel that if he thought slavery was to be restored, he would burn the whole of San Domingo to the ground. A black general dining with Lacroix pointed to his two daughters and asked him, "Are these to go back to slavery?" It was as if they could not believe it.

## ALL INSURRECTIONS AGAINST CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

The whole house-slave character of these new masters of the sweets of government is summed up in the observation of a French historian who was part of the French expedition:

But no one observed that in the new insurrection of San Domingo, as in all insurrections which attack constitutional authority, it was not the avowed chiefs who gave the signal for revolt, but obscure creatures for the greater part personal enemies of the coloured generals.

This subservience to a ruling class by new rulers is rampant all over the Caribbean today, and I understand it much better when I read and get it into my head that after just ten years of freedom and becoming masters of San Domingo, that was the way they behaved to the emissary sent by Bonaparte.

They were totally and completely subservient and it took a man like Dessalines, an absolute barbarian, to lead the people finally to their freedom. Dessalines could not write: the name of many a Haitian general had to be traced for him in pencil for him to trace it over in ink. But he was the one who could lead the rebellious mass of the population. All the educated ones, all those who were not so educated but who had sat for a while in the seats of power, they were prepared to submit to any indignity in order to remain, not with power but merely the symbols and the profits of power.

I have two more quotations, one written fifty years later by a soldier who had fought against them, and one written at the time by General Leclerc, the brother-in-law of Napoleon, who was in command of the expedition. General Lemmonier-Delafosse (who believed in slavery), wrote in his memoirs:

But what men these blacks are! How they fight and how they die! One has to make war against them to know their reckless courage in braving danger when they can no longer have recourse to strategem. I have seen a solid column, torn by grape-shot from four pieces of cannon, advance without making a retrograde step. The more they fell, the greater seemed to be the courage of the rest. They advanced singing, for the Negro sings everywhere, makes songs on everything. Their song was a song of brave men and went as follows:

*To the attack, grenadier,  
Who gets killed, that's his affair.  
Forget your ma,  
Forget your pa,  
To the attack, grenadier,  
Who gets killed, that's his affair.*

This song was worth all our republic songs. Three times these brave men, arms in hand, advanced without firing a shot, and each time repulsed, only retired after leaving the ground strewn with three-quarters of their troop. One must have seen this bravery to have any conception of it. Those songs shouted into the sky in unison by 2,000 voices, to which the cannon formed a bass, produced a thrilling effect. French courage alone could resist it. Indeed large ditches, an excellent artillery, perfect soldiers have us a great advantage. But for many a day that massed square which marched singing to its death, lighted by a magnificent sun, remained in my thoughts, and even today after more than 40 years, this majestic and glorious spectacle still lives as vividly in my imagination as in the moments when I saw it.

And finally General Leclerc wrote to his brother-in-law Napoleon Bonaparte:

We have in Europe a false idea of the country and the men whom we fight against.

That was written by a defeated general over 150 years ago. Today, 150 years after, not only in Europe and the United States, but in the very West Indies itself, there is a false idea of the country in which our people live and the quality of the people who live in it.

## OUR ANCESTORS

These are my people, these are my ancestors. They are yours too, if you want them. We are descendants from the same stock and the same kind of life on the sugar plantations which made them what they were. Faced with certain difficulties, we would respond in the same way. That seems inherent in people who have made the Middle Passage and had to learn all that they can and build a new life with what they gathered from the standards, the ideas and the ideologies of the people and the new civilisation in which they live. But I repeat: We had brought ourselves. We had not come with nothing.





I do not think it was at all accidental that after a dozen years of fighting these men showed themselves equal to the soldiers of Napoleon, the finest army Europe had then known. They are our people. They are our ancestors. If we want to know what the ordinary population can do, let us know what they have done in the past. It is the way of life, not blood. The Negro people in the Caribbean are of the same stock as the men who played such a role in the history of their time. We are the product of the same historical past and the same type of life, and as long as we are not being educated by the Colonial Office (or the stooges of the financial interests), we shall be able to do whatever we have to do. We have to remember that where slavery was abolished by law, the great mass of the Negro slaves had shown that they were ready to take any steps that were necessary to free themselves. That was a very important step in the making of the Caribbean people.

#### CAPTAIN CIPRIANI

We now have to move on to more modern times, and we shall be able to do that more confidently and easily because what we are, both positively and negatively, is the result of what we have been. I shall use two examples, the example of Trinidad and the example of Barbados. Trinidad first. I shall use this to explain the particularity of the insular history of the different islands. We know that Trinidad produced the most remarkable politician of the British West Indies during the twentieth century. Arthur Andrew Cipriani. Now, where did he come from?

In Trinidad we had a number of Frenchmen who came to the island in the last years of the 18th Century. First of all they were able to find a source of economic progress independent of the sugar estates. They worked cocoa estates, therefore were independent of the sugar magnates and of the colonial officials. They were, some of them, men of great culture, and fully able to stand up against the domination of sugar planters and colonial officials. They had a language of their own, in addition to their economic independence. They had a religion of their own, they were Roman Catholics and therefore were able to feel a differentiation between their religion and the Protestant religion of the British domination. Therefore, while they shared to some degree the superior status and opportunities that all local whites had, they were constantly aware of themselves as a body of people distinct from, and even opposed at times to the British colonial caste. That was the origin of the independent political attitude that Cipriani took from the beginning of the war in regard to the opportunities for West Indian self-assertion that the war of 1914-1918 opened to the West Indian people, at least in the general opinion of the times. So we get it clearly. Cipriani was able to take the stand he did because the French Creoles had a long tradition of independent economic life and social differentiation.

That to begin with. But there was more to Cipriani. I remember seeing the soldiers who went to the war of 1914-1918. Many of them wore shoes consistently for the first time. To the astonishment of everybody (I believe

not excluding the men themselves and Captain Cipriani), they became soldiers who were able to hold their own in the complicated techniques of modern warfare and the social relations that accompany it; to hold their own with soldiers not only from Britain, but from some of the most advanced countries of the Commonwealth. Cipriani never forgot that, never. From that time he advocated independence, self-government, and federation on the basis that the West Indian rank and file, "the bare-footed man" as he called him, was able to hold his own with any sort of people anywhere. He had seen it in war, a stern test. That was the basis of his ceaseless agitation from island to island in the British Caribbean, mobilising labour against capital for independence and federation. So you see that Cipriani was no historical accident. That he was able to discover the tremendous qualities of the Caribbean population (with this I began) was due to the fact that history had presented him with political opportunities unfolding the capacities of a highly developed people. These soldiers were the descendents of Toussaint's army.

### GRANTLEY

Now another example, Barbados. Barbados, one of the most highly developed, most highly civilised territories in the extra-European world. You will have noticed that of the middle-class people in the early years of political activity, there was only one member of the black middle class who took a prominent and in fact very important part. That was Sir Grantley Adams. And while I do not wish to make Grantley and the fine work he did merely a product of historical circumstances, I have to say that of the Caribbean territories, Barbados alone had an unbroken tradition of political activity and actually had a House of Assembly. In Barbados therefore there was something for Grantley to join. He had to sacrifice a great deal. At times his life was in danger. But we have to know, that in those revolutionary days, nowhere else did any member of the black middle class enter into politics. Today a whole lot of them are very noisy politicians, the way is very easy, you get a good salary, you can become a minister, and you can go to England and be entertained by royalty! But, Cipriani and Grantley Adams started before World War II. In those days there was nothing but work and danger.

### WE WERE LONG READY

And now I come to my final contention. As late as 1945 the number of people in the Caribbean who had the vote was less than 5%. I say that if we look properly at who and what we were, we were long ready for self-government and independence, most certainly by 1920. And I go further, and I say that by delaying the achievement of self-government, having to appoint a Royal Commission after the upheavals of 1937-1938, and by the mean and grudging granting to so many the vote, so many to become ministers, and all the palaver and so-called education by which the British government claimed that it trained the West Indian population for self-government, a terrible damage was inflicted upon us. In reality, our people were mis-educated, our political consciousness was twisted and broken. Far from being guided to independence by the 1960's, from 1920 onwards, for forty years the imperialist governments poisoned and corrupted that sense of self-confidence and political dynamic needed for any people about to embark on the uncharted seas of independence and nationhood. We are still without that self-confidence and that dynamic today. We lack them because for the last half-century, we were deprived of making the Caribbean people what our history and achievements had made possible and for which we were ready. That then is my conclusion. They have not educated, they have mis-educated

us, stood in our way, piled burdens on our backs. Let me quote one of our most profound analysts:

Free is how you is from the start, an' when it look different you got to move, just move, an' when you movin' say that it is a natural freedom that make you move.

That is George Lamming, than whom no one has a clearer view of words like independence, freedom, liberty . . .

Still we have made history. As evidence of what we can make of ourselves, I need only add some of the names our people from the Caribbean have inscribed on the pages of history. Here I shall give a list of names, a list without which it is impossible to write of the history and literature of Western Civilisation. No account of Western Civilisation could leave out the names of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Alexander Hamilton, Alexander Dumas (the father), Leconte Delisle, Jose Maria de Heredia, Marcus Garvey, Rene Maran, Saint-John Perse, Aime Cesaire, George Padmore, Frantz Fanon, and allow me to include one contemporary, a Cuban writer, Alejo Carpentier. I do not mention the remarkable novelists who we of the British Caribbean have produced during the last twenty years. I end this list by a name acknowledged by critics all over the world as an unprecedented, unimaginable practitioner of his particular art—I refer, of course, to Garfield Sobers.

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Excerpt from:  
*Party Politics in the West Indies* (1962)

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### **THE MIDDLE CLASSES**

The middle classes in the West Indies, coloured peoples, constitute one of the most peculiar classes in the world, peculiar in the sense of their unusual historical development and the awkward and difficult situation they occupy in what constitutes the West Indian nation, or, nowadays, some section of it.

Let me get one thing out of the way. They are not a defective set of people. In intellectual capacity, i.e. ability to learn, to familiarise themselves with the general scholastic requirements of Western civilization, they are and for some time have been unequalled in the colonial world. If you take percentages of scholastic achievement in relation to population among the underdeveloped, formerly colonial, coloured countries, West Indians would probably be at the head and, I believe, not by a small margin either. What they lack, and they lack plenty, is not due to any inherent West Indian deficiency. If that were so we would be in a bad way indeed. I set out to show that the blunders and deficiencies of which they are guilty are historically caused and therefore can be historically corrected. Otherwise we are left with the demoralizing result: "That is the way West Indians are," and closely allied to this: "The man or men who have brought us into this mess are bad men. Let us search for some good men." As long as you remain on that level, you understand nothing and your apparently "good" men turn rapidly into men who are no good. That is why I shall keep as far away from individuals as I can and stick to the class. I am not fighting to win an election.

For something like twenty years we have been establishing the premises of a modern democratic society: parliamentary government, democratic rights, party politics, etc. The mere existence of these is totally inadequate — the smash-up of the Federation has proved that. We now have to move on to a more advanced stage. To think that what I say is the last word in political wisdom is to make me into just another West Indian politician. I am posing certain

profound, certain fundamental questions. Their urgency lies in the fact that our political pundits and those who circulate around them, consistently ignore them, try to pretend that they do not exist.

Who and what are our middle classes? What passes my comprehension is that their situation is never analysed in writing, or even mentioned in public discussion. That type of ignorance, abstinence, shame or fear, simply does not take place in a country like Britain. There must be some reason for this stolid silence about themselves, some deep, underlying compulsion. We shall see.

Our West Indian middle classes are for the most part coloured people of some education in a formerly slave society. That means that for racial and historical reasons they are today excluded from those circles which are in control of big industry, commerce and finance. They are almost as much excluded from large-scale agriculture, sugar for example. That is point number one. Thus they as a class of people have no knowledge or experience of the productive forces of the country. That stands out painfully in everything they do and everything they do not do. Mr. Nehru talks about India's new steel mills, President Nasser talked about his dam which caused a war, President Nkrumah talked and preached about his Volta Dam for ten years before he got it. A West Indian politician talks about how much money he will get from the British Government or from the United States. It is because the class from which he comes had and has no experience whatever in matters of production. It is the same in agriculture. They have never had anything to do with the big sugar estates. Banking is out of their hands and always has been. There is no prospect that by social intermixing, intermarriage, etc., they will ever get into those circles. They have been out, are out and from all appearances will remain out. That is a dreadful position from which to have to govern a country. In Britain, France, Australia, you have capitalist parties, men who represent and are closely associated with big capital, big agriculture, finance. You have also labour parties. In Britain a hundred members in the House of Commons are placed there by the union movement. The Labour Party members are the heads or connected with the heads of the union movement, of the Labour Party, of the Cooperative Movement; thus, apart from Parliament, they have a social base. In the West Indies some of the politicians have or have had posts in the labour or union movement. But as a class they have no base anywhere. They are professional men, clerical assistants, here and there a small business man, and of late years administrators, civil servants and professional politicians and, as usual, a few adventurers. Most of the political types who come from this

class live by politics. All personal distinction and even in some cases the actual means of life and the means of improving the material circumstances of life, spring from participation, direct or indirect, in the government, or circles sympathetic to or willing to play ball with the government. Thus the politicians carry into politics all the weaknesses of the class from which they come.

They have no trace of political tradition. Until twenty years ago they had no experience of political parties or of government. Their last foray in that sphere was a hundred and thirty years ago, when they threatened the planters with rebellion of themselves *and the slaves* if they were not permitted to exercise the rights of citizens. Since then they have been quiet as mice. On rare occasions they would make a protest and, the ultimate pitch of rebellion, go to the Colonial Office. They did not do any more because all they aimed at was being admitted to the ruling circle of expatriates and local whites. More than that they did not aspire to. It is most significant that the father of the anti-imperialist democratic movement is a white man, A. A. Cipriani, and the biggest names are Alexander Bustamante who spent a lot of his life in Spain, Cuba and the United States, and Uriah Butler, a working man: not one of them is a member of the ordinary middle class. Sir Grantley Adams may appear to be one. He most certainly is not. After being educated abroad, he came back to Barbados, which alone of the West Indian islands had an elected House of Representatives. He neglected what would have been a brilliant and lucrative profession at the bar to plunge himself into politics. Middle class West Indians do not do that.

Knowledge of production, of political struggles, of the democratic tradition, they have had none. Their ignorance and disregard of economic development is profound and deeply rooted in their past and present situation. They do not even seem to be aware of it. For several generations they have been confined to getting salaries or fees, money for services rendered. That is still their outlook.

For generations their sole aim in life was to be admitted to the positions to which their talents and education entitled them, and from which they were unjustly excluded. On rare occasions an unexpected and difficult situation opened a way for an exceptional individual, but for the most part they developed political skill only in crawling or worming their way into recognition by government or big business. When they did get into the charmed government circles or government itself, they either did their best to show that they could be as good servants of the Colonial Office as any, or when they rose to become elected members in the legislature, some of them maintained a loud (but safe) attack on the government. They actually did little. They were not responsible for

anything, so they achieved a cheap popularity without any danger to themselves.

Thus the class has been and is excluded from the centres of economic life, they have no actual political experience, they have no political tradition. The democracy and West Indianisation was won by mass revolt. Even this revolt was led by men who were not typically middle class. When, after 1937-38, the democratic movement started, it was a labour movement. Gradually, however, the British Government, felt itself compelled to make the Civil Service West Indian, i.e. middle class. By degrees the middle class took over the political parties. The Colonial Office carefully, what it called, educated them to govern, with the result that the Federation is broken up and every territory is in a political mess.

Let us stick to the class, the class from which most of our politicians come, and from which they get most of their views on life and society.

All this politicians' excitement about independence is not to be trusted. In recent years the middle classes have not been concerned about independence. They were quite satisfied with the lives they lived. I never saw or heard one of them around the politicians who was actively for independence. Their political representation faithfully reproduced this attitude. I can say and dare not be challenged that in 1959 one man and one only was for independence, Dr. Williams. I do not know one single West Indian politician who supported him except with some non-committal phrases. You cannot speak with too much certainty of a class unless you have made or have at your disposal a careful examination. But of the politicians I am absolutely certain. Independence was not an integral part of their politics. The evidence for this is overwhelming and at the slightest provocation I shall make it public. The drive for independence now is to cover up the failure of the Federation.

If you watch the social connections of the politicians and the life they live, you will see why their politics is what it is. I do not know any social class which lives so completely without ideas of any kind. They live entirely on the material plane. In a published address Sir Robert Kirkwood quotes Vidia Naipaul who has said of them that they seem to aim at nothing more than being second-rate American citizens. It is much more than that. They aim at nothing. Government jobs and the opportunities which association with the government gives, allows them the possibility of accumulating material goods. That is all.

Read their speeches about the society in which they live. They have nothing to say. Not one of them. They promise more jobs and tell the population that everybody will have a chance to

get a better job. They could not say what federation meant. They are unable to say what independence means. Apart from the constitution and the fact that now they will govern without Colonial Office intervention, they have nothing to say. They are dying to find some Communists against whom they can thunder and so make an easier road to American pockets. What kind of society they hope to build they do not say because they do not know.

Their own struggle for posts and pay, their ceaseless promising of jobs, their sole idea of a national development as one where everybody can aim at getting something more, the gross and vulgar materialism, the absence of any ideas or elementary originality of thought; the tiresome repetition of commonplaces aimed chiefly at impressing the British, this is the outstanding characteristic of the West Indian middle class. The politicians they produce only reproduce politically the thin substance of the class.

Let us stay here for a while. These people have to know what they are. Nobody except our novelists is telling them.

We live in a world in the throes of a vast reorganization of itself. The religious question is back on the order of discussion. Two world wars and a third in the offing, Nazism, Stalinism, have made people ask: where is humanity going? Some say that we are now reaching the climax of that preoccupation with science and democracy which well over a hundred and fifty years ago substituted itself for religion as the guiding principle of mankind. Some believe we have to go back to religion. Others that mankind has never made genuine democracy the guiding light for society. Freud and Jung have opened depths of uncertainty and doubt of the rationality of human intelligence. Where the West Indian middle class (with all its degrees) stand on this, who is for, who is against, who even thinks of such matters, nobody knows. They think they can live and avoid such questions. You can live, but in 1962 you cannot govern that way.

Are they capitalists, i.e., do they believe in capitalism, socialism, communism, anarchism, anything? Nobody knows. They keep as far as they can from committing themselves to anything. This is a vitally practical matter. Are you going to plan your economy? To what degree is that possible, and compatible with democracy? To West Indian politicians a development programme is the last word in economic development. They never discuss the plan, what it means, what it can be. If they feel any pressure they forthwith baptise their development programme as "planning."

Where does personality, literature, art, the drama stand today in relation to a national development? What is the relation between



the claims of individuality and the claims of the state? What does education aim at? To make citizens capable of raising the productivity of labour, or to give them a conception of life? West Indian intellectuals who are interested in or move around politics avoid these questions as if they were the plague.

Some readers may remember seeing the movie of the night of the independence of Ghana, and hearing Nkrumah choose at that time to talk about the African Personality. This was to be the aim of the Ghanaian people with independence. Is there a West Indian personality? Is there a West Indian nation? What is it? What does it lack? What must it have? The West Indian middle classes keep far from these questions. The job, the car, the fridge, the trip abroad, preferably under government auspices and at government expense, these seem to be the beginning and end of their preoccupations. What foreign forces, social classes, ideas, do they feel themselves allied with or attached to? Nothing. What in their own history do they look back to as a beginning of which they are the continuation? I listen to them, I read their speeches and their writings. "Massa day done" seems to be the extreme limit of their imaginative concepts of West Indian nationalism. Today nationalism is under fire and every people has to consider to what extent its nationalism has to be mitigated by international considerations. Of this as of so much else the West Indian middle class is innocent. What happens after independence? For all you can hear from them, independence is a dead end. Apart from the extended opportunities of jobs with government, independence is as great an abstraction as was federation. We achieve independence and they continue to govern.

It has been pointed out to me, in a solid and very brilliant manuscript, that the accommodation of the middle class to what is in reality an impossible position is primarily due to the fact that, contrary to the general belief, it is in essence a position they have been in for many years. They or their most distinguished representatives have always been in the situation where the first necessity of advance or new status was to curry favour with the British authorities. The easiest way to continued acceptance was to train yourself to be able to make an impact as British and as submissive as possible. Now they have political power their attitude is the same only more so. Where formerly they had to accommodate themselves to the Governor and all such small fry, today they deal directly with the British Colonial Secretary and British Cabinet Ministers, with foreign business interests themselves instead of only their representatives abroad. The strenuous need and desire to accommodate, the acceptance of a British code of manners, morals and economic and political procedures, that is what they have always done, especially the upper Civil Servants.

They have had to live that way because it was the only way they could live. That new combination of a West Indianised Civil Service and a West Indianised political grouping are a little further along the road, but it is the same road on which they have always travelled. The man who has worked out something usually finds the aptest illustration of it. In conversation with me the author of this really superb piece of insight and analysis has said: "If they had had to deal with, for instance, Japanese or even German businessmen they would act differently. They would have been conscious of a sharp change. With the British they are not conscious of any break with the past. Accustomed for generations to hang around the British and search diligently for ways and means to gain an advantage, they now do of their own free will what they formerly had to do."

Having lived, as a class, by receiving money for services rendered, they transfer their age-old habits to government. But as this recent analysis shows, the very objective circumstances of their new political positions in office have merely fortified their experiences out of office.

It is such a class of people which has the government of the West Indies in its hands. In all essential matters they are, as far as the public is concerned, devoid of any ideas whatever. This enormous statement I can make with the greatest confidence, for no one can show any speech, any document, any report on which any of these matters — and the list is long — are treated with any serious application to the West Indian situation. These are the people from whom come the political leaders of the West Indies. The politicians are what they are not by chance.

What is the cause of this? A list of causes will be pure empiricism allowing for an infinite amount of "on the one hand" and "on the other hand". The cause is not in any individual and not in any inherent national weakness. The cause is in their half-and-half position between the economic masters of the country and the black masses. They are not an ordinary middle class with strong personal ties with the upper class and mobility to rise among them and form social ties with them. From that they are cut off completely. And (this is hard for the outsiders to grasp, but it is a commonplace in the West Indies) for centuries they have had it as an unshakeable principle that they are in status, education, morals and manners, separate and distinct from the masses of the people. The role of education in the West Indies has had a powerful influence here. The children of an aristocracy or of a big bourgeoisie take education in their stride. Their status is not derived from it. But where your grandfather or even your father had some uncertain job or was even an agricultural labourer, a

good education is a form of social differentiation. It puts you in a different class. Twenty years is too short a time to overcome the colonial structure which they inherit, the still powerful influence of the local whites, still backed by the Colonial Office. The Civil Service open to them fortifies this sentiment. It is not that no progress has been made. Writing in 1932 and analysing the political representatives of the coloured people, I had this to say:

“Despising black men, these intermediates, in the Legislative Council and out of it, are forever climbing up the climbing wave, governed by one dominating motive — acceptance by white society. It would be unseemly to lower the tone of this book by detailing with whom, when and how Colonial Secretaries and Attorneys-General distribute the nod distant, the bow cordial, the shake-hand friendly, or the cut direct as may seem fitting to their exalted highnesses; the transports of joy into which men, rich, powerful and able, are thrown by a few words from the Colonial Secretary's wife or a smile from the Chief Justice's daughter. These are legitimate game, yet suit a lighter hand and less strenuous atmosphere than this. But political independence and social aspirations cannot run between the same shafts; sycophancy soon learns to call itself moderation; and invitations to dinner or visions of a knighthood form the strongest barriers to the wishes of the people.

“All this is and has been common knowledge in Trinidad for many years. The situation shows little signs of changing. The constitution is calculated to encourage rather than to suppress the tendency.”\*

That has been overcome. A black man of ability and influence can make his way. In personal relations, in strictly personal relations, the political types meet the white economic masters with a confidence and certainty far removed from the strange quirks of thirty years ago. But their ancestry (as described above) is bad. They are political *nouveaux-riches*. And all such lack assurance (or are very rude in unimportant matters). This middle class with political power minus any economic power are still politically paralysed before their former masters, who are still masters. The only way of changing the structure of the economy and setting it on to new paths is by mobilising the mass against all who will stand in the way. Not one of them, even the professed Communist Jagan, dares to take any such step. They tinker with the economy, they wear themselves out seeking grants, loans and foreign investments which they encourage by granting fabulous advantages dignified by the name of pioneer status. (It is impossible to conceive any people more unlike the pioneers who extended the American nation than these investors of little money with large possibilities.) Here is the hurdle against which the Federation broke its back. Sitting uneasily on the fence between these two classes, so changed now

from their former status, the middle classes and the middle class politicians they produce saw federation as everything else but a definitive change in the economic life and the social relations which rested upon it. The economy lives for the most part on a sugar quota granted by the British Government. In a society where new political relations are clamped upon old economic relations, the acceptance of the quota system appears to give an impregnable position to the old sugar plantation owners. This reinforces the age-old position of the classes and fortifies the timidity of the middle classes. They therefore are frantic in building more roads, more schools, a hospital; except where, as in Jamaica, it cannot be hidden, they turn a blind eye to the spectres of unemployment and underemployment, in fact do everything to maintain things essentially as they were. It is no wonder, therefore, that they discuss nothing, express no opinions (except to the Americans that they are anti-Communist), keep themselves removed from all the problems of the day, take no steps to see that the population is made aware of the real problems which face it, and indeed show energy and determination only to keep away or discredit any attempts to have the population informed on any of the great problems which are now disturbing mankind. They know very well what they are doing. Any such discussion can upset the precarious balance which they maintain. Any topic which may enlarge the conception of democracy is particularly dangerous because it may affect the attitude of the mass of the population. How deeply ingrained is this sentiment is proved by the fact that nowhere in the islands has the middle class found it necessary to establish a daily paper devoted to the national interest. In fact in Trinidad when it became obvious that this was not only possible but everyone expected it, the political leadership was indifferent when it was not actively hostile. After twenty years nowhere have they felt it necessary to have a daily paper of their own. The obvious reason for that is that they have nothing to say. They want to win the election and touch nothing fundamental.

It is obvious to all observers that this situation cannot continue indefinitely. The populations of the islands are daily growing more restless and dissatisfied. The middle classes point to parliamentary democracy, trade unions, party politics and all the elements of democracy. But these are not things in themselves. They must serve a social purpose and here the middle classes are near the end of their tether. Some of them are preparing for troubles, trouble with the masses. Come what may, they are going

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\* *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, by C. L. R. James, Coulton & Co., Ltd., Nelson, Lancashire, England, 1932.

to keep them in order. Some are hoping for help from the Americans, from the Organisation of American States.



Without a firm social base, they are not a stable grouping. Some are playing with the idea of dictatorship, a benevolent dictatorship. But different groupings are appearing among them. Those educated abroad are the most reactionary, convinced as they are of their own superiority. The lower middle class locally educated are to a large degree ready for political advances — they are socially very close to the mass. There are also groupings according to age. Those over fifty have grown up with an innate respect for British ideals. They welcome in the new regime positions of status from which they were formerly excluded, but they accommodate themselves easily to authority. But the younger generation has grown up with no respect for any authority whatever; even some from abroad who have gone into good government jobs bring with them from Europe and the New World the scepticism prevailing there of any particular doctrine or social morality. Independence will compel the posing of some definite social discipline. The old order is gone. No new order has appeared. The middle classes have their work cut out for them. Their brief period of merely enjoying new privileges after three hundred years of being excluded is about over.

The West Indian middle classes have a high standard of formal education. They are uneducated and will have to educate themselves in the stern realities of West Indian economic and social life. Independence will place them face to face with the immense messes the imperialists are leaving behind. The economic mess is the greatest mess of all, and the other messes draw sustenance from it. It is not insoluble. Far from it. Economic development on the grand scale is first of all people, and history has endowed us with the potentially most powerful and receptive masses in all the underdeveloped countries. The effects of slavery and colonialism are like a miasma all around choking us. One hundred and fifty years ago, when the Non-conformists told the slave-owners, "You cannot continue to keep human beings in this condition," all the slave-owners could reply was, "You will ruin the economy, and further what can you expect from people like these?" When you try to tell the middle classes of today, "Why not place responsibility for the economy on the people?" their reply is the same as that of the old slave-owners: "You will ruin the economy, and further what can you expect from people like these?" The ordinary people of the West Indies who have borne the burden for centuries are very tired of

it. They do not want to substitute new masters for old. They want no masters at all. Unfortunately they do not know much. Under imperialism they had had little opportunity to learn anything. History will take its course, only too often a bloody one.



Bringing in the sugar crop on a large estate. As Dr. Williams calculates 1961 General Election returns, friends engage in an old-time Creole bacchanal. Daughter Erika yawns while Mrs. Andrew Carr embraces biscuit manufacturer and successful P.N.M. candidate Alfredo Bermudez. Mrs. Harold Despres, wife of early Williams supporter, has Andrew Carr standing behind her and Dr. Solomon on her left.

## The Artist in the

### Caribbean (1959)



This being a university audience, I shall take much for granted.

The artist is a human being who uses usually one, sometimes more than one medium of communication with exceptional force and skill. I think that is as far as we need to go to begin with. There are such people in the Caribbean and our society has now reached a stage in which they have scope. How much exactly?

To my mind it is the question of the medium which at the present time is crucial, far more for the Caribbean than for the artist, who usually does the best that he can with what is to hand.

An artistic medium is a thoroughly artificial construction, through which an individual is able to see and to express the world around him. It may be very intimate, as the human voice. It may be remote, as architecture on the grand scale or the human and material equipment at the disposal of the movie director. It may be subtle and complicated as the prose of the *Ulysses* of James Joyce or the overtones of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Without being un-subtle, it can be bold and aggressive as the orchestration of Wagner or the early Stravinsky.

Yet despite this bewildering variety I think I have observed that exceptional mastery in the medium is intimately related to the natural surroundings in

which the artist has grown up, to the society in which he lives, and his national or even regional ancestry; these may or may not be directly related to the specific artistic tradition which he has inherited or encounters in his search for a mode of expression, but they most often are. A few years ago I was wandering in the south of France and reading about Cezanne. I spent some time in the district to which he had returned for the last years of supreme achievement. I emerged finally with the impression of a man with generations of southern France behind him, who had studied in Paris and learned what the artists of his time had to teach him in technical knowledge and discovery, but who finally returned to the neighbourhood of his early youth and there found the new objective circumstances which enabled him to give a new direction to modern painting.

How long and in what form had these early impressions been a part of his artistic consciousness?

I am very much concerned this evening with the great artist. The period in which Shakespeare lived is the period in which the Bible was written. It is the period of the marriage of native English with the Latin incorporations which the developing civilisation needed. Nevertheless the impression that I now have of the greatest master of language with whom I am able to have acquaintance is this. He was an Englishman, of yeoman lineage, who was born and grew to manhood in the Midlands of Elizabethan England, for whom thought and feeling were always experienced in terms of nature, the physical responses of human beings and the elemental categories of life and labour. This is the basis of his incomparable vividness and facility of expression and the source of his universality. On Shakespeare's language Mr. F. R. Leavis has written some illuminating pages.

Racine was at the opposite pole in verbal refinement and sophistication. No Englishman ever wrote like Racine. No Englishman could. Pascal and Racine gave the French language a form which moulded French thought (and therefore French life) for well over a century, until a great writer who heralded a great social revolution expanded the range and opened up new modes of feeling and expression for the French people, whence they spread to the rest of the world. That is how I think of Rousseau.

The question around which I am circling is this: is there any medium so native to the Caribbean, so rooted in the tight association which I have made between national surroundings, historical development and artistic tradition, is there any such medium in the Caribbean from which the artist can draw that strength which makes him a supreme practitioner? (We can for the time being sum up the whole under the term artistic tradition, which as you see I use in a very wide sense to include all that goes to making it. I may mention in passing that it is never more powerful than when the artist is consciously breaking with it or some important aspect of it.)

I shall not keep you in suspense. So far as I can see, there is nothing of the kind in the Caribbean and none in sight to the extent that I, at any rate, can say anything about it. So far as I can see in the plastic arts, in musical composition, as well as in literature, we are using forms which have been borrowed from other civilisations. Language for us is not a distillation of our past. *Robinson Crusoe*, *Paul et Virginie*, even *Gauguin* are only on the surface exotic. They have no roots among people like ourselves, nothing from which we can instinctively draw sustenance. For us and for people like us there is no continuous flow such as for instance the Bachs into Haydn into Mozart into Beethoven. . . .; or in literature, Shakespeare, Milton, the Augustans, the Romantics, the Victorians, the Georgians and the revolt against them all of T. S. Eliot. There is no Donne in our ancestry for us to rediscover and stimulate the invention of new forms and new symbols. You will remember



that to clarify his own style Eliot found it necessary to launch an assault upon Milton that nearly (but not quite) toppled that master from the throne on which he had sat unchallenged for 250 years. All that is not for us. It is by this lack that I think I can account for the astonishing barrenness (in the sense that I am speaking here) of the artistic production of Canada, of Australia, of New Zealand, of South Africa. The United States has overcome this defect in literature. In music, in painting, it is as poverty-stricken as the others. Where it has created in the arts, it has broken new ground, new and popular. We can console ourselves that in this matter of shallow origins which prevent our artistic talents from striking the deep roots which seem necessary to full development and towering efflorescence, we are not alone. Size has nothing to do with it. Look at Ibsen and Kierkegaard, and the Greek city-state.

I do not know that it is to be regretted. And before we draw the extreme lugubrious conclusions, we should remember (this is the only absolute in these remarks) that artistic production is essentially individual and the artistic individual is above all unpredictable. Who could have predicted Moussorgsky?

It may seem that I am laying an undue emphasis on the great, the master artist. I am not chasing masterpieces. I have made clear that in my view the great artist is the product of a long and deeply rooted national tradition. I go further. He appears at a moment of transition in national life with results which are recognised as having significance for the whole civilised world. By a combination of learning (in his own particular sphere), observation, imagination and creative logic, he can construct the personalities and relations of the future, rooting them in the past and the present. By that economy of means which is great art, he adds to the sum of knowledge of the world and in doing this, as a general rule, he adds new range and flexibility to the medium that he is using. But the universal artist is universal because he is above all national. Cezanne was the product of the French Impressionists of the French 19th century and of Poussin, a French master of two centuries before.

If it takes so much to produce them, the results are commensurate.

A supreme artist exercises an influence on the national consciousness which is incalculable. He is created by it but he himself illuminates and amplifies it, bringing the past up to date and charting the future. We tend to accept this in general. Few, particularly university men, will question the influence of Shakespeare on the intellectual, the psychological and even the social development of the English. Such a writer is a pole of reference in social judgment, a source of inspiration in concept, in language, in technique (not always beneficial), to succeeding generations of artists, intellectuals, journalists, and indirectly to ordinary citizens. That view is traditional in academic circles though they may not carry it to the extremes that I do. I, however, am concerned with something else.

The Greeks and the Florentines of the great period understood the direct, the immediate influence of the great artist upon the society in which he actually lived. Sometimes, then rediscovers him when it needs him. But today in particular he is a tremendous force while he then rediscovers him when it needs him. But today in particular he is a tremendous force while he lives, and particularly to people like us, with our needs.

I do not think we appreciate the influence which Shakespeare and Burbage must have had on the shaping of Elizabethan London. Quite recently I spent six months in a small town in the South of Spain. I had little time to read except *Don Quixote* and we had with us a small volume containing reproductions by Goya. Book and pictures seemed to us merely illustrations of what we saw all around us the moment we put our foot outside the house. If I could see it, surely the men of that particular time must have seen it themselves and been affected by it in a manner quite impossible for us today.

Read again Ben Johnson's tribute to Shakespeare. Nothing of the kind written since has ever exceeded it. And I am sure, though I cannot stay to prove it here, but the Shakespeare Ben Johnson saw was not the Shakespeare that we see today. We have certain advantages, I admit, but for Johnson and the masses of working people who were Shakespeare's fans, he was new and exciting, with an impact that he could never have for us who have already absorbed indirectly so much of what he brought into the world. and Rome of his time. Of that there is no question. Quite recently the Mannerists, a school of and Rome of his time. Of that there is no question. Quite recently the Manierists, a school of painters who succeeded him, have come into their own. The critics tell us that they were not exaggerators of Michelangelo's idiosyncracies, their style was an independent style with its own values. I master who came into his own only a generation ago is Greco. When you go to the Vatican ask for master who coame into his own only a generation ago is Greco. When you go to the Vatican ask for permission to see the last two paintings Michelangelo ever did; they are in a private chapel of the Pope's the Capella Paolina. I shall not try to go into detail about them but at first sight you will see a strange landscape recalling those that Greco painted of Toledo, apart from the fact that we know that Greco had contact with Angelo's paintings, and was directly influenced by him. Yet another modern rediscovery is Caravaggio whose name was Michelangelo Caravaggio. I, who have spent much of such time that I could spare for these matters in studying and restudying the work of Michelangelo, am acutely conscious of his affinity with the great master whose name he bore. We discover all these centuries after. We do not know the half of what the men of that time felt and thought about the great artists who dominated their lives and thought. It is Vasari's volumes on the art of the Renaissance, not Berenson. Wolfflin, or even Burckhardt who open this world to us.

And now. Is everything historical, the whole history of art, against us of the Caribbean? I don't think so. You will have noticed that the references I make to Greece where the political form was the city-state; to Florence, to Rome, to Toledo. I state further my belief that the influence of Shakespeare was most heavily concentrated in London. These cities in which it was possible for the impact of the artist to be felt by a substantial number of the population. This world in little concentrated his own impressions and theirs. I believe that this was the environment which created more men of genius in a Greek or Florentine city of 50,000 citizens than in modern societies of 150 million. Michelangelo's Rome had only 40,000 people. Our situation in the Caribbean is very similar. Trinidad and Barbados are already very close in their demographic structure to the cities of ancient Greece or the Italian towns of the middle ages. There is an urban centre and agricultural areas closely related. I can only say taht I believe this form of social existence will condition to a substantial degree the development of art in the Caribbean. In fact I think this advantage will ultimately outweigh all other disadvantages. Our world is small but it is (or soon will be) complete, and we can all see all of it.

But you may ask me: what about the artist in the Caribbean today. I would not have come all this distance to deliver encomiums or disapprovals of West Indian writers and artists. If I emphasize what seems to me heights which today they cannot reach, it is because of my conviction that it is only when we are able to give them the concrete freedom of the conditions I have sketched that we shall get from them the best of which they are capable and, more important, get from them what at this stage of our existence we so much need. On our workers in the plastic arts, I have no judgments to pass. I have not the qualifications for doing so. But we have some very distinguished writers. I shall mention only three: Lamming the Barbadian, Naipaul the

Trinidadian, and Vic Reid of *The Leopard* from Jamaica. These are very gifted men. I believe that Lamming is as gifted for literature as Garfield Sobers is for cricket, and I do not believe that in the whole history of that game (with which I am very familiar) there are more than half a dozen men who started with a physical and mental equipment superior to that of young Sobers. But Sobers was born into a tradition, into a medium which though transported was so well established that it has created a Caribbean tradition of its own. This is what I am talking about. There are no limits to what Sobers can achieve. Lamming I believe to be objectively circumscribed. Still more limited are our painters and musicians.

There are things we can do. If there were not I would not speak about this at all. In the age in which we live and in the present social and political stage of the underdeveloped countries, we cannot leave these (and other) matters to an empirical growth which took centuries to develop in other countries. We cannot force the growth of the artist. But we can force and accelerate the growth of the conditions in which he can make the best of the gifts that he has been fortunate enough to be born with. Of that I have no doubt whatever; but the details are mundane and will have to wait for the discussion.

Let me stick to the strictly artistic aspects. This is a university and I expect this audience to have actual or psychological affinities with academic activities directed towards the Caribbean. Let me end with what I am thinking about at the present time since my return to Trinidad some 18 months ago. The ideas that I have expressed here are, as I think should be obvious, the result of years of observation and reflection on art abroad. Since I have been living in Trinidad, I have observed what is going on there in the light of these general ideas. I have been much struck by the work, first, of Beryl McBurnie. You will no doubt have been delighted by the reception which she and her group received at an international festival in Canada not so long ago. Her success in my view is due to the fact that with the necessary training and experience abroad she has dug deep into the past history of the island, observed closely the life around her. Her inventions, the confidence from successes, the reconsiderations which failures bring, have been fed and have grown in the national tradition and under the scrutiny and responses of a national audience. That is the source of her strength.

There is another artist in Trinidad who performs in a medium that would be ranked not very high in the hierarchy of the arts, although I believe Shakespeare would have listened very carefully to him, and Aristophanes would have given him a job in his company. I refer of course to Sparrow. The importance of Sparrow for what I am saying this evening is that he uses a medium which has persisted in Trinidad, in spite of much official and moral discouragement, and has survived to become a world favourite. I am myself continually astonished and delighted at the way in which Sparrow uses the calypso tradition, the way in which he extends it, the way in which he makes it a vehicle for the most acute observations on the social life and political developments around him, for his genuine musicianship, his wit and his humour. I believe that in addition to his natural gifts, he is enormously helped by the fact that he is using a national form and that his audience is a national audience. This is the origin of what has made calypso so popular

abroad. Local men playing for the local people. Every calypsonian who stays abroad too long loses the calypso's distinctive quality. When our local dramatists and artists can evoke the popular response of a Sparrow, the artists in the Caribbean will have arrived.

My conclusion, therefore, is this. At this stage of our existence our writers and our artists must be able to come home if they want to. It is inconceivable to me that a national artistic tradition, on which I lay so much stress as an environment in which the artist must begin, it is inconceivable to me that this can be established by writers and artists, however gifted, working for what is essentially a foreign audience. I think I could prove that already their work is adversely affected by it. They can live where they please. It is not for me to tell an artist how to direct his personal life; I would as soon try to tell him how to write or what to paint. But their books should, I think, be printed at home. Kipling's finest work was first published in the India of some 75 years ago. The books most certainly must be published at home. I have no doubt in my own mind that they must be written and printed and published for the national audience. If I say this with such confidence it is because I know that the writers themselves are thinking in similar terms if not exactly for the same reasons. The finest piece of writing that to my knowledge had come from the West Indies is a poem which bears the significant title, "Cahier d'un Retour A Mon Pays Natal": Statement on my return to my native country. It is the desperate cry of a Europeanised West Indian poet for reintegration with his own people. The most successful evocation of the West Indian atmosphere that I know is a recent winner of the Prix Renaudot, *La Lezarde*, by a young Martiniquan, Glissant. Yet his style is more traditionally French than that of Cezaire. He lives in Paris. I cannot believe that the last resources of West Indian artistic talent can be reached under these conditions.

That is what the nation needs at the present time, and that is what the artist needs, the creation of a national consciousness. Perhaps the most important thing I have to say this evening is that if the threads of a tradition can be discovered among us and made into a whole, if we are to be shocked into recognition of what we are, and what we are not, with the power that this will bring, it is the great artist who will do it. He may by fiction or drama set our minds at rest on the problem which intrigues so many of them: what is Africa to us? He may be a great historian. (His history might be denounced by professional historians and justly. It would not matter. It would have served the national need: look at the illusions most of these European nations have had of themselves.) But such work cannot be created under the conditions in which our artists work today.

These conditions can be changed. Lack of money is too facile an explanation. It is lack of that very national consciousness, lack of that sense of need; we lack that impulse towards a more advanced stage of existence which sees material obstacles in terms of how to overcome them. Today we can no longer compare ourselves in artistic (as well as in other) matters with the barrenness of 25 years ago. The time for that is past. Our sights now should be trained 25 years ahead. In the Caribbean there are many things that are denied to us and will be denied for a long time to come. But the production of a supreme artist and all that he or she can give to us (including what lesser artists will gain), that we need not despair of. The rapidity of all modern developments is on our side. Our native talent is astonishing—it continually astonishes me. And in these matters we never know. Life is continually causing us to revise our most carefully based judgments. Let us do what we can do. Let us create the conditions under which the artist can flourish. But to do that, we must have the consciousness that the nation which we are hoping to build, as much as it needs the pooling of resources and industrialization and a higher productivity of labour, needs also the supreme artist.

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## IV. SPORTS & LITERATURE

Excerpt from: *Beyond A Boundary* (1963)

### *'What is Art?'*

I HAVE made great claims for cricket. As firmly as I am able and as is here possible, I have integrated it in the historical movement of the times. The question remains: What is it? Is it mere entertainment or is it an art? Mr. Neville Cardus (whose work deserves a critical study) is here most illuminating, not as subject but as object. He will ask: 'Why do we deny the art of a cricketer, and rank it lower than a vocalist's or a fiddler's? If anybody tells me that R. H. Spooner did not compel a pleasure as aesthetic as any compelled by the most cultivated Italian tenor that ever lived I will write him down a purist and an ass.' He says the same in more than one place. More than any sententious declaration, all his work is eloquent with the aesthetic appeal of cricket. Yet he can write in his autobiography: 'I do not believe that anything fine in music or in anything else can be understood or truly felt by the crowd.' Into this he goes at length and puts the seal on it with 'I don't believe in the contemporary idea of taking the arts to the people: let them seek and work for them.' He himself notes that Neville Cardus, the writer on cricket, often introduces music into his cricket writing. Never once has Neville Cardus, the music critic, introduced cricket into his writing on music. He finds this 'a curious point'. It is much more than a point, it is not curious. Cardus is a victim of that categorization and specialization, that division of the human personality, which is the greatest curse of our time. Cricket has suffered, but not only cricket. The aestheticians have scorned to take

notice of popular sports and games—to their own detriment. The aridity and confusion of which they so mournfully complain will continue until they include organized games *and the people who watch them* as an integral part of their data. Sir Donald Bradman's technical accomplishments are not on the same plane as those of Yehudi Menuhin. Sir John Gielgud in three hours can express adventures and shades in human personality which are not approached in three years of Denis Compton at the wicket. Yet cricket is an art, not a bastard or a poor relation, but a full member of the community.

The approach must be direct. Too long has it been impressionistic or apologetic, timid or defiant, always ready to take refuge in the mysticism of metaphor. It is a game and we have to compare it with other games. It is an art and we have to compare it with other arts.

Cricket is first and foremost a dramatic spectacle. It belongs with the theatre, ballet, opera and the dance.

In a superficial sense all games are dramatic. Two men boxing or running a race can exhibit skill, courage, endurance and sharp changes of fortune; can evoke hope and fear. They can even harrow the soul with laughter and tears, pity and terror. The state of the city, the nation or the world can invest a sporting event with dramatic intensity such as is reached in few theatres. When the democrat Joe Louis fought the Nazi Schmelling the bout became a focus of approaching world conflict. On the last morning of the 1953 Oval Test, when it was clear that England would win a rubber against Australia after twenty years, the nation stopped work to witness the consummation.

These possibilities cricket shares with other games in a greater or lesser degree. Its quality as drama is more specific. It is so organized that at all times it is compelled to reproduce the central action which characterizes all good drama from the days of the Greeks to our own: two individuals are pitted against each other in a conflict that is strictly personal but no less strictly representative of a social group. One individual batsman faces one individual bowler. But each represents his side. The personal achievement may be of the utmost competence or brilliance. Its ultimate value is whether it assists the side to victory or staves off defeat. This has nothing to do with morals. It is the organizational structure on which the whole spectacle is built. The dramatist, the novelist, the choreographer, must *strive* to make his individual character symbolical of a larger whole. He may or may not succeed. The runner in a relay race must take the plus or minus that his partner or partners give him. The soccer forward and the goalkeeper may at certain rare moments find themselves sole representatives of their sides. Even the baseball-batter, who most nearly approaches this particular aspect of cricket, may

and often does find himself after a fine hit standing on one of the bases, where he is now dependent upon others. The batsman facing the ball does not merely represent his side. For that moment, to all intents and purposes, he is his side. This fundamental relation of the One and the Many, Individual and Social, Individual and Universal, leader and followers, representative and ranks, the part and the whole, is structurally imposed on the players of cricket. What other sports, games and arts have to aim at, the players are given to start with, they cannot depart from it. Thus the game is founded upon a dramatic, a human, relation which is universally recognized as the most objectively pervasive and psychologically stimulating in life and therefore in that artificial representation of it which is drama.

The second major consideration in all dramatic spectacles is the relation between event (or, if you prefer, contingency) and design, episode and continuity, diversity in unity, the battle and the campaign, the part and the whole. Here also cricket is structurally perfect. The total spectacle consists and must consist of a series of individual, isolated episodes, each in itself completely self-contained. Each has its beginning, the ball bowled; its middle, the stroke played; its end, runs, no runs, dismissal. Within the fluctuating interest of the rise or fall of the game as a whole, there is this unending series of events, each single one fraught with immense possibilities of expectation and realization. Here again the dramatist or movie director has to strive. In the very finest of soccer matches the ball for long periods is in places where it is impossible to expect any definite alteration in the relative position of the two sides. In lawn tennis the duration of the rally is entirely dependent upon the subjective skill of the players. In baseball alone does the encounter between the two representative protagonists approach the definitiveness of the individual series of episodes in cricket which together constitute the whole.

The structural enforcement of the fundamental appeals which all dramatic spectacle must have is of incalculable value to the spectator. The glorious uncertainty of the game is not anarchy. It would not be glorious if it were not so firmly anchored in the certainties which must attend all successful drama. That is why cricket is perhaps the only game in which the end result (except where national or local pride is at stake) is not of great importance. Appreciation of cricket has little to do with the end, and less still with what are called 'the finer points', of the game. What matters in cricket, as in all the arts, is not finer points but what everyone with some knowledge of the elements can see and feel. It is only within such a rigid structural frame that the individuality so characteristic of cricket can flourish. Two batsmen are in at the same time. Thus the position of representative of the side, though strictly independent,

is interchangeable. In baseball one batter bats at a time. The isolated events of which both games consist is in baseball rigidly limited. The batter is allowed choice of three balls. He must hit the third or he is out. If he hits he must run. The batter's place in the batting order is fixed—it cannot be changed. The pitcher must pitch until he is taken off and when he is taken off he is finished for that game. (The Americans obviously prefer it that way.) In cricket the bowler bowls six balls (or eight). He can then be taken off and can be brought on again. He can bowl at the other end. The batting order is interchangeable. Thus while the principle of an individual representing the side at any given moment is maintained, the utmost possible change of personnel compatible with order is allowed. We tend to take these things for granted or not to notice them at all. In what other dramatic spectacle can they be found built-in? The greatness of the great batsman is not so much in his own skill as that he sets in motion all the immense possibilities that are contained in the game as structurally organized.

Cricket, of course, does not allow that representation or suggestion of specific relations as can be done by a play or even by ballet and dance. The players are always players trafficking in the elemental human activities, qualities and emotions—attack, defence, courage, gallantry, steadfastness, grandeur, ruse. This is no drawback. Punch and Judy, *Swan Lake*, pantomime, are even less particularized than cricket. They depend for their effect upon the technical skill and creative force with which their exponents make the ancient patterns live for their contemporaries. Some of the best beloved and finest music is created out of just such elemental sensations. We never grow out of them, of the need to renew them. Any art which by accident or design gets too far from them finds that it has to return or wither. They are the very stuff of human life. It is of this stuff that the drama of cricket is composed.



Innate faculty though it might be, the progress of civilization can leave it unused, suppress its use, can remove us from the circumstances in which it is associated with animal energy. Developing civilization can surround us with circumstances and conditions in which our original faculties are debased or refined, made more simple or more complicated. They may seem to disappear altogether. They remain part of our human endowment. The basic motions of cricket represent physical action which has been the basis not only of primitive but of civilized life for countless centuries. In work and in play they were the motions by which men lived and without which they would perish. The Industrial Revolution transformed our existence. Our fundamental characteristics as human



beings it did not and could not alter. The bushmen reproduced in one medium not merely animals but the line, the curve, the movement. It supplied in the form they needed a vision of the life they lived. The Hambleton men who made modern cricket did the same. The bushmen's motive was perhaps religious, Hambleton's entertainment. One form was fixed, the other had to be constantly re-created. The contrasts can be multiplied. That will not affect the underlying identity. Each fed the need to satisfy the visual artistic sense. The emphasis on style in cricket proves that without a shadow of doubt; whether the impulse was literature and the artistic quality the result, or vice-versa, does not matter. If the Hambleton form was infinitely more complicated it rose out of a more complicated society, the result of a long historical development. Satisfying the same needs as bushmen and Hambleton, the industrial age took over cricket and made it into what it has become. The whole tortured history of modern Spain explains why it is in the cruelty of the bull-ring that they seek the perfect flow of motion. That flow, however, men since they have been men have always sought and always will. It is an unspeakable impertinence to arrogate the term 'fine art' to one small section of this quest and declare it to be culture. Luckily, the people refuse to be bothered. This does not alter the gross falsification of history and the perversion of values which is the result.

Lucian's Solon tells what the Olympic Games meant to the Greeks. The human drama, the literature, was as important to them as to us. No less so was the line, the curve, the movement of the athletes which inspired one of the greatest artistic creations we have ever known—Greek sculpture. To this day certain statues baffle the experts: are they statues of Apollo or are they statues of athletes? The games and sculpture were 'good' arts and popular. The newly fledged democracy found them insufficient. The contrast between life under an ancient landed aristocracy and an ancient democratic regime was enormous. It can be guessed at by what the democracy actually achieved. The democracy did not neglect the games or sculpture. To the contrary. The birth of democracy saw the birth of individualism in sculpture. Immense new passions and immense new forces had been released. New relations between the individual and society, between individual and individual, launched life on new, exciting and dangerous ways. Out of this came the tragic drama. After a long look at how the creation of the Hambleton men became the cornerstone of Victorian education and entertainment, I can no longer accept that Peisistratus encouraged the dramatic festival as a means of satisfying or appeasing or distracting the urban masses on their way to democracy. That would be equivalent to saying that the rulers of Victorian England encouraged cricket to satisfy or appease or distract the

urban masses on their way to democracy. The Victorian experience with cricket suggests a line of investigation on the alert for signs both more subtle and more tortuous. It may be fruitful to investigate whether Peisistratus and his fellow rulers did not need the drama for themselves before it became a national festival. That at any rate is what happened to the Victorians.

The elements which were transformed into Greek drama may have existed in primitive form, quite apart from religious ceremonial—there is even a tradition that peasants played primitive dramas. However that may be, the newly fledged Greek democrat found his need for a fuller existence fulfilled in the tragic drama. He had no spate of books to give him distilled, concentrated and ordered views of life. The old myths no longer sufficed. The drama recast them to satisfy the expanded personality. The end of democracy is a more complete existence. Voting and political parties are only a means. The expanded personality and needs of the Victorian aspiring to democracy did not need drama. The stage, books, newspapers, were part of his inheritance. The production of these for democracy had already begun. What he needed was the further expansion of his aesthetic sense. Print had long made church walls and public monuments obsolescent as a means of social communication. Photography would complete the rout of painting and sculpture, promoting them upstairs. The need was filled by organized games.

Cricket was fortunate in that for their own purposes the British ruling classes took it over and endowed it with money and prestige. On it men of gifts which would have been remarkable in any sphere expended their powers—the late C. B. Fry was a notable example. Yet even he submitted to the prevailing aesthetic categories and circumscribed cricket as a 'physical' fine art. There is no need so to limit it. It is limited in variety of range, of subject-matter. It cannot express the emotions of an age on the nature of the last judgment or the wiping out of a population by bombing. It must repeat. But what it repeats is the original stuff out of which everything visually or otherwise artistic is quarried. The popular democracy of Greece, sitting for days in the sun watching *The Oresteia*; the popular democracy of our day, sitting similarly, watching Miller and Lindwall bowl to Hutton and Compton—each in its own way grasps at a more complete human existence. We may some day be able to answer Tolstoy's exasperated and exasperating question: What is art?—but only when we learn to integrate our vision of Walcott on the back foot through the covers with the outstretched arm of the Olympic Apollo.

Excerpts from:

*Mariners, Renegades & Castaways* (1953)

### THE CRISIS

Melville understands what America has given to the world—none better. He has chosen whaling for his unit of demonstration. And in a brilliant page he sums up the grandeur of the American past.

“What wonder, then, that these Nantucketers, born on a beach, should take to the sea for a livelihood! They first caught crabs and quohogs in the sand; grown bolder, they waded out with nets for mackerel; more experienced, they pushed off in boats and captured cod; and at last, launching a navy of great ships on the sea, explored this watery world; put an incessant belt of circumnavigation round it; peeped in at Bhering’s Straits; and in all seasons and all oceans declared everlasting war with the mightiest animated mass that has survived the flood; most monstrous and most mountainous; That Himmalehan, salt-sea Mastodon, clothed with such portentousness of unconscious power, that his very panics are more to be dreaded than his most fearless and malicious assaults!

“And thus have these naked Nantucketers, these sea hermits, issuing from their ant-hill in the sea, overrun and conquered the watery world like so many Alexanders; parcelling out among them the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans, as the three pirate powers did Poland. Let America add Mexico to Texas, and pile Cuba upon Canada; let the English overswarm all India, and hang out their blazing banner from the sun; two-thirds of this terraqueous globe are the Nantucketer’s. For the sea is his; he owns it, as Emperors own empires; other seamen

having but a right of way through it. Merchant ships are but extension bridges; armed ones but floating forts; even pirates and privateers, though following the sea as highwaymen the road, they but plunder other ships, other fragments of the land like themselves, without seeking to draw their living from the bottomless deep itself. The Nantucketer, he alone resides and riots on the sea; he alone, in Bible language, goes down to it in ships; to and fro ploughing it as his own special plantation. *There* is his home; *there* lies his business, which a Noah's flood would not interrupt, though it overwhelmed all the millions in China. He lives on the sea, as prairie cocks in the prairie; he hides among the waves, he climbs them as chamois hunters climb the Alps. For years he knows not the land; so that when he comes to it at last, it smells like another world, more strangely than the moon would to an Earthsman. With the landless gull, that at sunset folds her wings and is rocked to sleep between billows; so at nightfall, the Nantucketer, out of sight of land, furls his sails, and lays him to his rest, while under his very pillow rush herds of walruses and whales."

It is his history of America from 1620 to *Moby-Dick*. But note that Melville, as every truly great writer, sees history in terms of men. These Nantucketers were heroic men. And they did heroic deeds. Whalers have explored unknown seas and archipelagoes. People write of the famous voyages of men like Captain Cook and other heroes of international exploration. But, says Melville, many an incident to which these writers devote three chapters in their books, unknown whaling captains of Nantucket had experienced so often that they would not have thought them worth putting down in the ship's log-book. The whaling vessels rounded Cape Horn and established international commerce. They gave impetus to the liberation of Peru, Chile and Bolivia from the yoke of Spain. They nursed and repeatedly saved from extinction the infant colonies of Australia. That was America. And because already, in 1851, Melville could see that the social structure was cramping and thwarting men instead of developing them, he knew that the time had come for the ship of destiny once more to sail and see what the future would be.

He is as systematic as a sociologist, and the first thing he does in *Moby-Dick* is to show the existing world as he saw it.

The story is told by one Ishmael, a young New Yorker who goes to New Bedford and Nantucket, seeking a job on a whaling-ship. He gets one from the owners of the Pequod, Bildad and Peleg, two retired Nantucket sea captains who, like Ahab, had worked their way up from cabin boys. They are Quakers but the moral earnestness of the old Puritans has changed into a piety which but thinly covers their lust for money. Bildad, always reading the Bible, uses Scriptures as an argument to justify the most avaricious deals. From this Quaker whaling-stock with its grand and glorious history, we have as representatives, Bildad and Peleg, and the rebellious Ahab.

Equally unlovely are Nantucket and New Bedford. New Bedford has the finest patrician houses in America and is the place for brilliant weddings. But in its streets are the meanest mariners from all over the world, savages from every part of the South Seas, and green boys from the hills of Vermont and New Hampshire. When Mrs. Hussey, the landlady where Ishmael stays, suspects that someone may have committed suicide in one of her rooms, she prays for his soul, but laments what has happened to her counterpane. She refuses to allow the door to be broken down at once and suggests that a locksmith who lives about a mile away be sent for. She sends a message to the painter asking for a sign, which will say that smoking in the parlor and suicides should not be allowed—might as well kill two birds with one stone, she remarks. In Nantucket, Ishmael is offered the only accommodations available—to share a bed with a savage. When he inquires more as to this man, he receives the laconic reply, "He pays reg'lar." Nothing else matters.

This population, in addition to its lust for money, has a craving for the horrible. A Negro preacher, like a black Angel of Doom, reads a book in his pulpit and his text is the blackness of darkness, and the weeping and wailing and teeth-gnashing there. In one inn a picture shows a vessel half-floundering in the journey round Cape Horn. Only its three dismantled masts are visible, and an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clear over the craft, is in the act of impaling himself upon the three mast-heads. Another piece of furniture consists of a heathenish array of clubs and spears with glittering teeth; others were tufted with knots of human hair. The savage who is to share Ishmael's bed is busy selling dried-up human heads which are in great demand as curios. He carries them knotted on a string, and is very active that after-

noon because it is Saturday and it would not look well to be hawking such things in the streets on Sunday when people are going to church.

Whaling, as seen from the shore is the source of death and terror, and the religion of the Nantucketers corresponds. To the mourning widows and the solemn whalers about to face the perils of the fishery, Father Mapple, himself an old seafaring man, tells the story of Jonah and the whale so that it is more terrifying than it is in the Old Testament. His moral is that the truly and faithfully repentant do not clamor for pardon but are grateful for punishment.

There is wealth of course. In the fine patrician houses there are reservoirs of oil and nightly they recklessly burn the spermacetti candles. But this wealth has been dragged up from the Atlantic and Pacific and the Indian Oceans by whaling men. It is what happens to these men, the men that create the wealth, which will decide the future of society. Melville mentions the owners and the spenders only to brush them aside.

This is life on land.

Like the rest of the story it is all seen through the eyes of Ishmael. Like Ahab, Ishmael lived first in Melville's imagination. Like Ahab, it is the twentieth century, our own, which has its Ishmaels in every city block.

He is a member of a distinguished American family, is well educated and has been a teacher. But he cannot endure the social class in which he was born and reared, so he lives as a worker, digging ditches, or what else comes to hand. He is subject to fits of periodical depression (today we would call him a neurotic) and whenever he feels a fit coming on, he goes to sea. Today they do not go to sea—they join the working class movement or the revolutionary movement instead.

Who does not recognize Ishmael? He wants to be a plain ordinary seaman. He feels himself one of the people. But it isn't that he likes workers. It is that he hates authority and responsibility of any kind. He does not want to be a Commodore but he does not want to be a cook either. Presidential elections, international politics, commerce, all of these he wants no part of. He wants to go to sea because when life on land is too much for them, men have always gone to sea to find there some explanation of what is baffling them. He wants to go whaling because he wants adventure and peril in far

places. And (which sends a shiver down our spines today) he loves the horrible, although he is neither pervert nor degenerate.

Ishmael's description of himself shows that the instinct for violence, the cruelty and the sadism inherent in Western Civilization of the twentieth century are not accidental. They were detected in America over three generations ago.

What is wrong with this young man? He is as isolated and bitter as Ahab and as helpless. He cannot stand the narrow, cramped, limited existence which civilization offers him. He hates the greed, the lies, the hypocrisy. Thus shut out from the world outside, he cannot get out of himself. The only truly civilized person he can find in New Bedford and Nantucket is a cannibal savage, the harpooneer, Queequeg, and the story of their relations is, like all great literature, not only literature but history.

Everyone knows Fenimore Cooper's stories of the white hunter, Deerslayer, and his two Indian comrades, *The Last of the Mohicans*. In these tales Cooper was only following a practice which for centuries had been followed by some of the very greatest writers of France and Britain. They were using the primitive savage, in his presumed nobility and innocence of vice, as a stick with which to beat the constantly increasing injustices, suffering, deceptions and pretenses which seemed to grow side by side with the growth of civilization. That such a literary device should have been so widespread, so popular and should have lasted so long shows only the terrible need in Western culture for some protest against the burdens which the growth of material wealth was placing on the human personality.

Already a man disillusioned with the world, what he sees in New Bedford and Nantucket so shocks Ishmael that when he goes back to the inn he watches Queequeg, the seller of human heads, with fresh interest. What he sees in him is exactly what he has not been able to find in the world around him.

"Through all his unearthly tattooings, I thought I saw the traces of a simple honest heart; and in his large, deep eyes, fiery black and bold, there seemed tokens of a spirit that would dare a thousand devils. And besides all this, there was a certain lofty bearing about the Pagan, which even his uncouthness could not altogether

maim. He looked like a man who had never cringed and never had had a creditor."

Where could one find men like this? The men Ishmael knew were pent up in lath and plaster, tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks.

Along with Queequeg's untamed and undefeated appearance went an equally distinctive calm and self-reliance. "He made no advances whatever; appeared to have no desire to enlarge the circle of his acquaintances. All this struck me as mighty singular; yet, upon second thoughts, there was something almost sublime in it. Here was a man some twenty thousand miles from home, by the way of Cape Horn, that is—which was the only way he could get there—thrown among people as strange to him as though he were in the planet Jupiter; and yet he seemed entirely at his ease; preserving the utmost serenity; content with his own companionship; always equal to himself."

Poor lonely Ishmael feels something melting in him. Queequeg is the opposite of everything he has known. "No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it. There he sat, his very indifference speaking a nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits. Wild he was; a very sight of sights to see; yet I began to feel myself mysteriously drawn towards him. And those same things that would have repelled most others, they were the very magnets that thus drew me. I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy."

He makes overtures of friendship to Queequeg who returns them with an immediate generosity which knows no bounds.

So far it might seem that Melville is merely repeating the old pattern of noble savage versus corrupt civilization. But he is not doing that. Queequeg is no ideal figure. Queequeg's ignorance often makes his behavior entirely ridiculous. His religious practices, if sincere, are absurd. In his own country he has eaten human flesh. But the thing that matters is that as soon as they get off the land into the boat from New Bedford to Nantucket, Queequeg shows himself what he will later turn out to be, not only brave and ready to risk his life, but a master of his seaman's craft. To his splendid physique, unconquered spirit and spontaneous generosity, this child of



Nature has added mastery of one of the most important and authoritative positions in a great modern industry. Thus here with Queequeg, Melville does what he does all through the book, begins with the accepted practices, beliefs and even literary methods of his time, and then consciously and with the utmost sureness leaves them behind or rather takes them over into the world he saw ahead. He saw the future so confidently only because he saw so clearly all that was going on around him.

Ishmaels, we say, live in every city block. And they are dangerous, especially when they actually leave their own environment and work among workers or live among them. For when Ahab, the totalitarian, bribed the men with money and grog and whipped them up to follow him on his monomaniac quest, Ishmael, the man of good family and education, hammered and shouted with the rest. His submission to the totalitarian madness was complete.

Most of the men on the ship at some time or other showed antagonism to Ahab. Ishmael never did—not once. And the analysis of why this type of young man behaves as he does is one of Melville's greatest triumphs.

As usual with Melville's people in *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael at first sight is merely one of those dreamy young men of education and intellect who cannot live in the world. Ishmael's favorite place on board ship is up on the mast-head where he is supposed to be taking his turn at looking for whales. He never sees one, for he is up there dreaming his life away and imagining that his soul is once more at one with the waters that stretch around him to the horizon on every side. But soon it becomes apparent that Ishmael is no mere dreamer. He is a completely modern young intellectual who has broken with society and wavers constantly between totalitarianism and the crew.

First, totalitarianism. Why does Ishmael join Ahab's quest? What overwhelms him in 1851 is what modern psychologists talk about more than anything else, a sense of guilt. But it is not guilt for any sins he has personally committed. He does not feel at home in the world and he is constantly aware of this. Because of this he is dominated by a sense of inadequacy and isolation. In turn, he sees his fellow men as ridden with his own sense of homelessness and despair. As the Pequod sails in far-distant and lonely seas, sea ravens persistently perch on

the stays, though repeatedly driven away. For Ishmael these birds see in the ship some drifting uninhabited craft, a thing appointed to desolation and therefore a fit resting-place for their homeless selves. The black sea heaved and heaved as if its vast tides were a conscience and the great soul of the world was in anguish and remorse for the long sin and suffering it had bred. As the Pequod rounded the stormy waters of the Cape of Good Hope these birds and the fish seem to him to be guilty beings condemned to swim on everlastingly without any haven in store or to beat that black air without any horizon. There is no such world, there are no such fish, there are no such birds. Ishmael is an intellectual Ahab. As Ahab is enclosed in the masoned walled-town of the exclusiveness of authority, so Ishmael is enclosed in the solitude of his social and intellectual speculation.

Melville makes a heroic effort to get us to understand this type of mind. Ishmael says that he followed Ahab for a reason peculiar to himself, and he adds, unless he makes us understand this, then the story he is writing will have no meaning. We have to respect what a great writer says about what he is trying to do. Ishmael says that he shouted with the rest because the color of the whale was white.

It is startling but before you have read a page you get an idea of what a great imaginative writer can do, and what philosophers, economists, journalists, historians, however gifted, can never do.

Ishmael begins his explanation with a recognition of the fact that whiteness is the color of religion, of beautiful ceremonials, of weddings, of peace, of things that are beautiful and sincere, and grandly historical and above all, spiritual. After an impressive list acknowledging what the color white has meant, he says that nevertheless it is a color of terror. The reason is clear. For him there is no longer anything beautiful or sincere, or grandly historical, and above all, there is no longer anything of spiritual beauty in the world any more. So that now wherever he sees whiteness, it is a symbol of his spiritual isolation, his loneliness, his revulsion against the world, his deep psychological misery. We understand now why at the very beginning, long before he had seen a whale-ship, far less a whale, he carried already in his mind visions of whales and among them a white hooded monster. His experience of the world had created

in his mind a picture of it which he wanted to pursue and kill because it was torturing him. It was a monster large and powerful. It was hooded, because it saw nothing, paid attention to nothing, merely went its own way. And it was white because white was for him the immediate reminder of a world without any spiritual values, which for him, an intellectual, were the things by which he lived.

In the last paragraph of this famous chapter on the whiteness of the whale, Melville ties together all the social and philosophical themes which he is weaving.

For Ishmael who believes in nothing and therefore constantly analyzes all that he sees to find something, everything in the world is appearance, something superficial, put on. He examines it and below is nothing but bare, dead, white blankness. Whatever is beautiful is only deception, a color added to this dead unending whiteness, as a whore puts paint on her face to cover the rottenness inside. Everyone sees Nature in his own way. And this is the Nature that Ishmael sees. And the menace, the deadliness of Ishmael to society can be seen in a few phrases he uses to describe how he sees the natural world: "A dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows," and again, "the great principle of light, forever remains white or colorless in itself."

This is his explanation of the universe, seen as he would like us to believe, in the light of science by a thoughtful and sensitive human being. But there is nothing sensitive about it and nothing human. For when, at nights working at his charts, Ahab's humanity was conquered, there remained behind "a ray of living light to be sure, but without an object to color and therefore a blankness in itself." They are the very phrases Ishmael uses to describe his conception of Nature. Thus the totalitarian personality devoid of human feeling and restraint, no longer the master, but the instrument of his purpose, embodies in action the theoretical conclusions of the disoriented intellectual. No wonder that, with terror in his soul, Ishmael follows Ahab, as the guilt-ridden intellectual of today, often with the same terror, finds some refuge in the idea of the one-party totalitarian state.

But if Ishmael, the intellectual, is so strongly attracted to the man of action, equally strong on him is

the attraction of the crew. That in fact is what makes him modern. He must decide.

Ishmael begins by clinging to the powerful Queequeg and, in typical modern fashion, his relationship with him on land has all the marks of homosexuality. But as soon as they get on board among the crew, that relationship disappears. Ishmael submits to Ahab's mad purpose. But then over a long period under the influence of daily work with them, he almost becomes one of the anonymous crew. What keeps them apart is his intellectualism, his inability to embrace reality spontaneously, the doubt and fear and guilt and isolation from people, which compel him at all times to seek to find out what is happening to himself in relation to the world.

Melville does not let us for one moment escape from this distinction between Ishmael and the crew. Take the first day they see a whale. Ishmael is weaving some cord and Queequeg is helping him by periodically sliding a heavy oaken sword between the threads. As he works, Queequeg, unconsciousness personified, is looking idly at the water but Ishmael is busily constructing some complicated philosophical schema in which the whole operation is the Loom of Time, the cord is Necessity and Queequeg's sword represents the free will of men. Suddenly:

"Thus we were weaving and weaving away when I started at a sound so strange, long drawn, and musically wild and unearthly, that the ball of free will dropped from my hand, and I stood gazing up at the clouds whence that voice dropped like a wing. High aloft in the cross-trees was that mad Gay-Header, Tashtego. His body was reaching eagerly forward, his hand stretched out like a wand, and at brief sudden intervals, he continued his cries. To be sure the same sound was that very moment perhaps being heard all over the seas, from hundreds of whalemens' look-outs perched as high in the air; but from few of those lungs could that accustomed old cry have derived such a marvellous cadence as from Tashtego the Indian's."

No wonder the ball of free will drops from Ishmael's hand. The energy, power, and utter concentration of the terrific Tashtego blow Ishmael's philosophical nonsense to the winds. But it does not mean that Tashtego is, philosophically, a barbarian. No. His very lack of self-consciousness in life and work is itself a philosophical

attitude to life. Ishmael, looking up at him, is vaguely aware of this.

“As he stood hovering over you half suspended in air, so wildly and eagerly peering towards the horizon, you would have thought him some prophet or seer beholding the shadows of Fate, and by those wild cries announcing their coming.”

After his first violent experience of what hunting a whale from an open boat is like, Ishmael almost forgets his preoccupation with himself. He decides that, whatever happens, he will take it in his stride. He goes to his friend Queequeg and makes his will. He is the one who is attached to Queequeg by the rope. He sweats and strains with the rest. One day when they are squeezing spermacetti, all their hands in the soft fluffy mixture together, he experiences a sensation of comradeship and fraternity such as he had never felt before, and he wishes they could all squeeze sperm forever.

But Ishmael can go only so far. There comes a stage in the voyage of the *Pequod* which breaks him to pieces and leaves him worse than before.

In *Moby-Dick* the process of labor, though very realistically described, is presented as a panorama of labor throughout the ages. The men do not merely collect and prepare the raw material. The whale-ship is also a factory. When the blubber is ready, then the try-works, huge cauldrons, are put into place, and the oil is distilled. This is really modern industry. It is the turning point of the book, for everyone is shown for what he is.

That night Ishmael is at the helm and he looks down at the men working below.

“The hatch, removed from the top of the works, now afforded a wide hearth in front of them. Standing on this were the Tartarean shapes of the pagan harpooners, always the whale-ship’s stokers. With huge pronged poles they pitched hissing masses of blubber into the scalding pots, or stirred up the fires beneath, till the snaky flames darted, curling, out of the doors to catch them by the feet. The smoke rolled away in sullen heaps. To every pitch of the ship there was a pitch of the boiling oil, which seemed all eagerness to leap into their faces.

“Opposite the mouth of the works, on the further side of the wide wooden hearth, was the windlass. This served for a sea-sofa. Here lounged the watch, when not otherwise employed, looking into the red heat of the fire,

till their eyes felt scorched in their heads. Their tawny features, now all begrimed with smoke and sweat, their matted beards, and the contrasting barbaric brilliancy of their teeth, all these were strangely revealed in the capricious emblazonings of the works.

“As they narrated to each other their unholy adventures, their tales of terror told in words of mirth; as their uncivilized laughter forked upwards out of them, like the flames from the furnace; as to and fro, in their front, the harpooners wildly gesticulated with their huge pronged forks and dippers; as the wind howled on, and the sea leaped, and the ship groaned and dived, and yet steadfastly shot her red hell further and further into the blackness of the sea and the night, and scornfully champed the white bone in her mouth, and viciously spat round her on all sides; then the rushing Pequod, freighted with savages, and laden with fire, and burning a corpse, and plunging into that blackness of darkness, seemed the material counterpart of her monomaniac commander’s soul.”

That at first sight is the modern world—the world we live in, the world of the Ruhr, of Pittsburgh, of the Black Country in England. In its symbolism of men turned into devils, of an industrial civilization on fire and plunging blindly into darkness, it is the world of massed bombers, of cities in flames, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world in which we live, the world of Ahab, which he hates and which he will organize or destroy.

But when you look again, you see that the crew is indestructible. There they are, laughing at the terrible things that have happened to them. The three harpooners are doing their work. True to himself, Ishmael can see the ship only as an expression of Ahab’s madness. The men with whom he works, even Queequeg, his splendid friend, all of them are but part of the total madness.

“Wrapped, for that interval, in darkness myself, I but the better saw the redness, the madness, the ghastliness of others. The continual sight of fiend shapes before me, capering half in smoke and half in fire, these at last begat kindred visions in my soul, so soon as I began to yield to that unaccountable drowsiness which ever would come over me at a midnight helm.”

Part of his difficulty is that he is guiding the ship; in other words, however temporarily, he is in command of

the ship of destiny, and such responsibility always overwhelms this type with terror.

"I thought my eyes were open; I was half conscious of putting my fingers to the lids and mechanically stretching them still further apart. But, spite of all this, I could see no compass before me to steer by; though it seemed but a minute since I had been watching the card, by the steady binnacle lamp illuminating it. Nothing seemed before me but a jet gloom, now and then made ghastly by flashes of redness. Uppermost was the impression, that whatever swift, rushing thing I stood on was not so much bound to any haven ahead as rushing from all havens astern. A stark, bewildered feeling, as of death, came over me . . ."

He caught himself just in time to prevent the ship from perhaps capsizing.

That is the end of Ishmael. Henceforth he will seek refuge from the world in books, particularly in *Ecclesiastes* where it says that "All is vanity. ALL"—in large print. He takes refuge in his philosophical abstractions—he will soar like the eagle in the mountains and even if he has to swoop, his lowest flight will still be higher than that of ordinary men.

How wrong he is is proved but one brief chapter afterwards. The boiling is over and the hatches are replaced and sealed. What follows now is the summation of a whole way of life, the climax of all that Melville has been saying about the meanest mariners, the renegades and the castaways.

"In the sperm fishery, this is perhaps one of the most remarkable incidents in all the business of whaling. One day the planks stream with freshets of blood and oil; on the sacred quarter-deck enormous masses of the whale's head are profanely piled; great rusty casks lie about, as in a brewery yard; the smoke from the try-works has besooted all the bulwarks; the mariners go about suffused with unctuousness; the entire ship seems great leviathan himself; while on all hands the din is deafening.

"But a day or two after, you look about you, and prick your ears in this self-same ship; and were it not for the tell-tale boats and try-works, you would all but swear you trod some silent merchant vessel, with a most scrupulously neat commander. The unmanufactured sperm oil possesses a singularly cleansing virtue. This is the reason why the decks never look so white as just after what they

call an affair of oil. Besides, from the ashes of the burned scraps of the whale, a potent ley is readily made; and whenever any adhesiveness from the back of the whale remains clinging to the side, that ley quickly exterminates it. Hands go diligently along the bulwarks, and with buckets of water and rags restore them to their full tidiness. The soot is brushed from the lower rigging. All the numerous implements which have been in use are likewise faithfully cleansed and put away. The great hatch is scrubbed and placed upon the try-works, completely hiding the pots; every cask is out of sight; all tackles are coiled in unseen nooks; and when by the combined and simultaneous industry of almost the entire ship's company, the whole of this conscientious duty is at last concluded, then the crew themselves proceed to their own ablutions; shift themselves from top to toe; and finally issue to the immaculate deck, fresh and all aglow, as bridegrooms new-leaped from out the daintiest Holland.

"Now, with elated step, they pace the planks in twos and threes, and humorously discourse of parlors, sofas, carpets, and fine cambrics; propose to mat the deck; think of having hangings to the top; object not to taking tea by moonlight on the piazza of the forecastle. To hint to such musked mariners of oil, and bone, and blubber, were little short of audacity. They know not the thing you distantly allude to. Away and bring us napkins!

"But mark: aloft there, at the three mast heads, stand three men intent on spying out more whales, which, if caught, infallibly will again soil the old oaken furniture, and drop at least one small grease-spot somewhere. Yes; and many is the time, when, after the severest uninterrupted labors, which know no night; continuing straight through for ninety-six hours; when from the boat, where they have swelled their wrists with all day rowing on the Line,—they only step to the deck to carry vast chains, and heave the heavy windlass, and cut and slash, yea, and in their very sweatings to be smoked and burned anew by the combined fires of the equatorial sun and the equatorial try-works; when, on the heel of all this, they have finally bestirred themselves to cleanse the ship, and make a spotless dairy room of it; many is the time the poor fellows, just buttoning the necks of their clean frocks, are startled by the cry of 'There she blows!' and away they fly to fight another whale, and go through the whole weary thing again."



Thus, around the try-works, there comes to a head the hopeless madness, the rush to destruction of Ahab, and the revulsion from the world of Ishmael. Ahab sat in his cabin marking his charts; Ishmael, thinking of books and dreaming of how he would soar above it all like an eagle, will become in his imagination as destructive as his monomaniac leader. But the Anacharsis Cloutz deputation, the meanest mariners, renegades and castaways, remain sane and human, in their ever-present sense of community, their scrupulous cleanliness, their grace and wit and humor, and their good-humored contempt of those for whom life consists of nothing else but fine cambrics and tea on the piazza.



## THE WORK, THE AUTHOR, AND THE TIMES

**W**e have now analyzed the most important of Melville's writings. But in all such analysis, and particularly when it is related, as it must be related, to the social movement, there is one great danger. This is that the book, as a work of art, fades into the background, and it becomes a mere expression of social and political ideas. This is fatal because the social and political ideas in a great work of imagination are embodied in human personalities, in the way they are presented, in the clash of passions, the struggle for happiness, the avoidance of misery.

With the disappearance of the work as an imaginative creation of human relations, the author also tends to disappear, the supreme author, a unique individual, the type of human being who appears but rarely in the history of civilization. Yet he and his life are rooted in the life of their time. No book on Melville would be complete which did not attempt to place in their proper relation the work, the author, and the period.

The ancient Greeks in the great days of Greek civilization looked upon their great writers as second to none in the state. Here also, as in so many other judgments,

they were wiser than we. For consider. What Melville did was to place within the covers of one book a presentation of a whole civilization so that any ordinary human being today can read it in a few days and grasp the essentials of the world he lived in. To do this a man must contain within his single self, at one and the same time, the whole history of the past, the most significant experiences of the world around him, and a clear vision of the future. Of all this he creates an ordered whole. No philosopher, statesman, scientist or soldier exceeds him in creative effort.

Melville knew how rarely such writers appear, and as usual, he has given the best description of these gigantic efforts of individual human beings.

The great author begins, as we have seen, by seeing the elements of his characters in the world around him. Melville tolerates no nonsense on that question.

But after that an entirely individual personal process begins. The great author has read the great creative works of the past, and it is in this way that he absorbs the great characters and experiences of previous civilizations. He is mature, according to Melville, only when these writings are a part of him, and his own mind, so nourished, functions with complete independence.

Then follows his own original creation. It seems that really new characters with original instincts cannot be developed adequately within the framework of the consciousness of the age. The great author must find in his mind new depths of consciousness, hitherto unprobed, to fill out these original characters. Melville actually uses the term, "strange stuff" which upheaves and upgushes in the writer's soul. This strange stuff the author has to resolve into its primitive elements. Thus these rare original characters seem to demand for their creation an extension of the range of consciousness of their creators, and through him this extended consciousness is transferred to the rest of mankind, when they are ready to listen.

It is impossible to test whether all this is true or not. All we can do is to examine some other great creative works of the past and great authors of the past and see if any light is thereby thrown upon Melville in this combination of observing actual human character, reading the great works of the past and then digging down into the consciousness.

Two writers immediately come to mind—the great Greek tragedian, Aeschylus, and his *Prometheus Bound*, and the still more famous Shakespeare and his play *King Lear*.

Ahab is a rebel, i.e., a man who is dissatisfied with the old and must have something new. So is Prometheus. So is Lear. Ahab defies science and industrial power, the gods of the nineteenth century. Prometheus was nailed to a rock because he had stolen fire from heaven and given it to primitive, backward, suffering mankind to start them on the road to civilization by means of the arts and sciences. For this, Zeus, King of Gods and men, chained him to a rock for 30,000 years. But still Prometheus defied him. Lear believed that Nature was a beneficent goddess in whose name he ruled, and by whom all his actions were blessed. When he discovered that it was not so, he defied Nature. Then going mad, he denounced the whole society of which he had been ruler and gave a vision of the future.

When Ahab defies the spirit of fire, he is way out in distant seas, thousands of miles away from civilization, standing on the deck of the *Pequod*, with the meanest mariners, renegades and castaways around him. When Prometheus defies Zeus, he is chained to a rock, on a wild expanse of land at the very ends of the earth. Around him are some young women from all parts of the world who are determined to share his fate. When Lear defies the thunder and the lightning, the most powerful manifestations of the forces of Nature, he is also on an open heath, and with him are a retainer whom he himself had banished; a crazy fool; and another fugitive from justice, disguised as an agricultural vagrant. Zeus hurls Prometheus and his followers into the lower regions with the thunderbolts and lightning of a great storm. Lear is driven mad by the thunder and lightning. These breaking upon him after his grievous experiences seem to be the final culmination of his sufferings. Ahab escapes the lightning and the thunder and the corpusants only to fall victim to his own madness. At times the three characters use almost the same words. These similarities cannot possibly be accidental.

It seems that at very great crises in human history, and they must be very great, an author appears who becomes aware that one great age is passing and another beginning. But he becomes aware of this primarily in terms of new types of human character, with new desires, new

needs, new passions. The great writer, at least each of the three greatest writers the author of this book knows, conceives a situation in which this character is brought right up against things that symbolize the old and oppose the new. The scene is set outside the confines of civilization. What is old is established, it has existed for centuries, it is accepted. But the new will not be denied. It is not fully conscious of itself, but it is certain that it is right. A gigantic conflict is inevitable.

It is here that Melville's description of the creative process may help us.

Prometheus, though in the play he is one of the Gods, is an Athenian of the fifth century before Christ. Amidst the surrounding primitiveness and savagery, a wonderful civilization had flowered with almost marvellous suddenness, a civilization based on the development of industry and commerce, practicing democracy, gifted in architecture, sculpture, philosophy and the drama. We have not got the complete drama on Prometheus written by Aeschylus. We have only what amounts to Act. II of a play of three acts. But it seems fairly clear that Prometheus stood for the new, the splendid civilization, against the apathy, the ignorance, and perhaps the brutal tyranny of the old regime, or more probably the readiness of the first founders of the new regime to compromise with the old and leave things much as they were before. The history of Athens shows us figures who could have served as a model for him. How far he, from this model, was the creation of his author, we cannot at this distance tell. But this much we know. While the ancient Greeks understood the character, to this very day Prometheus is still the prototype of the revolutionary leader, benefactor of humanity, bold, defiant, confident. It would seem that Aeschylus went far beyond his actual model or models, and created the type in such perfection that it lives to this day.

With Lear we can get closer to Melville's theories. Lear was created at the beginning of the seventeenth century about a dozen years before the founding of New England. A new world was on its way, the world of free individualism, of the conquest of Nature, of social revolution against tyrannical monarchy, of open conflicts over the distribution of the national income, when new concepts of justice would be battled over, and scientific explanations would be sought for human crime and error. Now

this is what Lear spoke about when, driven mad by the wrongs inflicted upon him, he defied the storm on the heath.

Where did Shakespeare get all this from? How did he conceive of it all in the person of one single character? All we can say is that Melville's explanation is as good as any, and we should not forget that it is a great writer himself speaking. It took literally centuries before the modern world began to understand Lear. Shakespeare, having been given the initial impetus from outside, had to dig deep down into his own consciousness for the new feelings and the new ideas needed to complete his portrayal.

Melville says more than once and with great emphasis that what a great author like Shakespeare writes down is only a partial, inadequate, poor representation of what is in his mind. He says that there are two books, the one the author sees in his mind and the one he writes. And the one in the mind is as sluggish as an elephant, it will not move when called upon, and it sucks away the life-blood of the writer. It is too big and in places too obscure for accurate reproduction. It would seem then that the author does create within himself the character and its world and gives the best account of it he can.

The achievement of a great writer who writes an immortal book now stands before us in all its magnitude. He creates a world of human beings and an environment to correspond. He has read and absorbed how great characters in previous critical situations acted. He recognizes the similarity of emotions. He can use them to help his own structure. But what matters in his work is what is new, and that he must dig out for himself. What matters to us in Ahab is not his heroic determination. It is the sense of purpose, the attitude to science and industry, the defense of individual personality, the attitude to the men around him. There is not, and could not be anything like this in Aeschylus or in Shakespeare.

It is the completeness of the creation in the mind that seems to be the most astonishing thing. Just as from the real world of human beings, one can abstract philosophy, political economy, scientific theory, so from the partial account that is written down of this inherent world, one can deduce scientific theories of which the author was not at all directly conscious. Melville wrote *Moby-Dick* in 1851. Yet in it today can be seen the anticipations of Darwin's theory of man's relation to the natural world,

of Marx's theory of the relation of the individual to the economic and social structure, of Freud's theory of the irrational and primitive forces which lie just below the surface of human behavior.

He does not only anticipate the work of scientists. He is himself a scientist in human relations. Ahab is of the race of Prometheus. But it seems as if, for Melville, that type was now doomed. Great men, leading their fellows from one stage of civilization to another, there have always been and will always be, but the Promethean individual, containing in himself, his ideas, his plans, the chart of the future, he seems finished. In the world of affairs he leads only to disaster, which is why perhaps in literature he no longer appears at all.

The world of the author's creation is his own world in a very precise sense. Though rooted in reality, it is not a real world. No man ever chased or would chase a White Whale as Ahab did. No intellectual ever followed a totalitarian because of the whiteness of anything. The great writer is dealing in human emotions. The world he creates is designed to portray emotions. Those are real enough. And he will use anything that will bring those emotions vividly before his reader. The White Whale seems infinitely remote from the idea of the master race or the master plan. But within Melville's world the reasoning and feelings and actions and effects of the men who follow this fantasy are as real as those in the actual world of men.

The greatest scene in *King Lear* is that scene in which the old man defies the storm and then begins to speak like a prophet inspired with a vision of three centuries to come. Very fortunately we are fairly certain where Shakespeare got the idea. A few months before he wrote this play, a tremendous storm swept over Western Europe by sea and land and dealt such damage as had never been experienced within the memory of living man. For the men of Shakespeare's day, a Nature giving its blessings to men was an integral part of their philosophy of life, their concept of the world. Already in *Hamlet* Shakespeare had drawn a picture of a man whose personality was in insoluble conflict with the world in which he lived. In *Lear* Shakespeare was to carry this to its logical conclusion. Here in the storm was a symbol of a Nature that, far from being beneficent, had turned on man and wrecked his civilization. Shakespeare seized upon this and

found in it the perfect foil which would dramatize the sufferings and the defiance and the vision of Lear. So impressed was Shakespeare's imagination by the storm that he used it in another play, *Macbeth*, written about the same time. The references to the great storm are unmistakable.

This was the procedure that Melville seems to have followed in *Moby-Dick*. As a young man he had been enormously impressed by the story of a whale which had turned on its pursuers and smashed their ship to pieces. Years passed and he began the writing of *Moby-Dick*. The central character is Ahab with his purpose. But Melville had to find an opposition. He found it in an actual whale, Moocha Dick, a gigantic monster which sought its pursuers on sight to give them deadly battle. Thus whales, the traditional source of wealth and power of men of that age, in the shape of the malignant Moocha Dick, became the symbol of a civilization which was no longer beneficent, but had turned against man.

Once the writer has got hold of his characters and their environment, then that world dominates everything, including himself. Structure, style, ideas, phrases fit into or spring from this distinct creation. For convenience we have spoken of characters, then of environment, here of reality, there of logical imagination. But in these great creative works these things are no more separate than, in the real world, a man's political activity can be separated from his personality. The artist's world is a total whole and its effects on the reader is designed to be total. Ahab for example is eaten up inside by his speculations on the nature of the universe and his scientific plans to capture Moby Dick. This is shown on his physical person by the great lines of thought on his forehead which are constantly brought to the notice of the reader. Again, on two dramatic occasions, first Melville and then Ahab himself refer to the weight upon Ahab's back of the countless miseries men have endured since the days of Adam. Ahab's words are worth repeating, "I feel deadly faint, bowed, and humped, as though I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise."

But on at least twenty-five occasions in the book, from the chapter in which we first see him to the last pages in which he destroys the Pequod, Moby Dick is persistently described for us as a whale with a wrinkled forehead and a hump on his back. Those and his whiteness are his distinguishing features. Thus by degrees it dawns upon

us that Moby Dick is the physical embodiment of Ahab's inward crisis. His determination to slay Moby Dick is his determination to slay the demons which are torturing him. But Melville at the same time makes it consistently clear that Moby Dick is actually just a big fish in the sea. It is crazy Ahab who makes of him this fantastic symbol. Similarly the evil effect of the whiteness of the whale is felt by Ishmael who had brought with him from his life on land the vision of a white monster.

If within this world the writer feels that characters or events are needed to make his conception logical, he creates them, often in direct contradiction with ordinary experience and ordinary sense. He is guided by one fact—his world needs them. The writer of this book feels that it is out of some such need that there came figures like Queequeg, Daggoo and Tashtego.

This is the type of world created by the great writer. These are the effects he seeks and these are the means he uses to achieve them. This is his book, his own individual creation, and it is by means of the wrinkled brow and the whiteness of the whale, and the flag streaming forward from Tashtego's own forward-flowing heart that Melville says what he has to say.

And yet at the same time, this most intense individuality of creation is moulded not only out of the general social environment but of the very nationality of the author. Melville establishes in the most unequivocal form that his theme is world civilization. But Aeschylus was in every line of his work an Athenian of the fifth century B.C. Similarly Shakespeare was an Elizabethan Englishman, and Melville is the most American of all writers. It is not only his original character that is rooted in the external world. He himself is rooted in that world. We have tried to show this in the slight biographical sketches, and the attempt to outline the growth of his mind. But the roots are deeper.

We have given examples of Melville's strictly scientific method of selecting and defining his theme. All of *Moby-Dick* is built on this principle. From Chapter I to the last chapter he has his plan plotted and worked out in order, item after item stated, almost like a bill of lading. When he is finished with one topic he takes up another. He constantly classifies. From Chapter I to Chapter XXII he describes the land. Chapter XXIII describes the purpose of the voyage and describes mankind in general.



Chapters XXV to L describe all on board and *Moby Dick*. Chapters LI-XCV are almost entirely devoted to the crew. Chapter XCVI describes the Try-Works and the collapse of Ishmael. Two chapters later we have the stowing-down and the clearing-up and then the next chapter, XCIX, the Doubloon, brings all the characters up once more for systematic review. Chapters C to CXXXII shows all the characters now in rapid movement, introducing some new ones. Every chapter now deepens character and brings the catastrophe nearer. The last three chapters describe the chase. In between Melville periodically introduces a chapter describing a passing ship either to bring in some facet of the outside world, to increase the tension on the Pequod, or to do both. Structurally *Moby-Dick* is one of the most orderly books in the world but orderly in the sociological sense. It is the mark of a man shaped by a civilization where from its foundation the construction and objective classification of material things dominate life and thought to a degree far greater than in any other modern country.

But having once arranged a basic systematic plan, Melville then in his style exhibits all the American exuberance and insatiable grasp at every aspect of life in sight. Ancient and modern history, theology, mythology, philosophy, science, he takes hold of everything and uses it for any purpose he wants. He has in his head the majestic rhythms of the great English prose-writers and he can originate new variations of them. But even within these rhythms he is incurably colloquial and discursive. On occasion some of Ahab's speeches ring slightly hollow. But Melville achieved a harmony between classical English style and the ease of American civilization, which has been managed neither before nor since. He could do whatever he wanted to do, and almost on the same page he could reconcile the most contradictory styles without strain.

And finally he was American, too, not only in structure and in style, but in the deepest content of his great book. No one can really say with any precision what influences shaped a writer's creative imagination. But the period in which Melville wrote was one of the most curious in the history of the United States. On the one hand the mass of the nation in the North, disoriented, cut away from old moorings, hungrily seeking a new basis for a sense of community. On the other—some of the most boundlessly

egotistical individual personalities the country has ever known. Some of the men of that period, Stanton, the Secretary of War, Thaddeus Stevens, William Lloyd Garrison, were men of a tempestuous force of character such as have no parallel in contemporary life. The lives of the generals, Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, make equally strange reading.

The Civil War put an end to this torment of a nation. The people found themselves in the formation of the Republican Party, and the struggle for the unity of the nation. The great individualists found their energies disciplined or stimulated in the war itself. But it seems clear that in his ruthless probing to the very end of the problem of individual personality and at the same time the search for a new basis of community, Melville was writing about an America that he knew. When with the end of the Civil War normal life returned, Melville was forgotten. But with the return of crisis in 1914, this time on a world scale, he has been rediscovered.

If this essentially American writer now takes on increasingly the status of the most representative writer of modern civilization, one result of it should be to bring more sharply into prominence the period in which he wrote, the period which preceded the Civil War. That period ushered in the world in which we live. For our world, a world of wars, the fact is neglected that the Civil War was the first great war of modern times. The great Americans of the period preceding it knew that something was wrong, something deeper than slavery, but inasmuch as they lived under democracy and the republic, and had no monarchy nor land-owning aristocracy to contend with, their task was difficult. They probed into strange places and what they found they did not often fully understand. There were no precedents. It is only today when democracies and republics once more have to examine their foundations that the work of Poe, Hawthorne, Whitman, Garrison and Phillips, and Melville can be fully understood. Melville today already towers above his countrymen, and such is the hunger of the world for understanding itself, that the time cannot be far distant when men in every country will know him for what he is—a writer in the great tradition of Aeschylus and Shakespeare and the unsurpassed interpreter of the age in which we live, its past, its present and its uncertain future.

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## V. SOCIALISM AND THE THIRD WORLD

### Lenin & the Problem: Excerpt from *Nkrumah Then and Now* (Forthcoming)

The countries known as underdeveloped have produced the greatest statesmen of the 20th century, men who have substantially altered the shape and direction of world civilisation in the last 50 years. They are four in number: Lenin, Gandhi, Mao-tse-tung and Nkrumah. They are not merely gifted individuals and effective politicians. They of the underdeveloped must be seen against the background of the developed civilisation of their times. The very words underdeveloped and advanced need some definition. It is a commonplace of contemporary life to be horrified at the fact that the Hitler regime murdered six million Jews. That is only part of the gruesome history. By 1941 Hitlerism ruled and tortured and massacred its enemies from the Bay of Biscay to Eastern Poland. Since the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, it is possible to say without dispute that Stalinism was doing the same from Eastern Poland to Vladivostock. Thus a vast area of civilisation had degenerated into elementary barbarism, primitive cruelty and disregard of human life, of ordinary common decency. The rest of the advanced countries of Western civilisation need to be seen within the context of this frightful reality. For a century, the United States had perpetrated against millions of its citizens a civil and psychological brutality of which it itself is only now becoming fully aware. James Baldwin, popularly regarded at home as well as abroad as the effective spokesman against the century-old persecution of Negro Americans, has unequivocally stated that the problem is not a problem of the black skin—it is a sickness in American civilisation itself which has expressed and expresses itself in the persecution of the Negro population.

France killed 80,000 in Madagascar and fought to the end to preserve its domination of Indo-China, Morocco, Tunis and Algeria. Just a few miles across the Mediterranean, France killed a million Algerians, a million of a total population of 10 million people, equivalent in terms of the United States to the extermination of the Negro population. Obviously the need of French civilisation at all costs to continue its domination was very great. The great mass of the British people have been the sanest in Europe for many years. But they have need to be on guard against what remains in Britain which formerly made hewers of wood, drawers of water and subordinate helots of hundreds of millions of Indians and over a hundred million Africans. What remains hidden in contemporary Britain we do not know, only that Britain is a part of Western civilisation, more obviously so every day. That civilisation now contemplates itself frantically seeking to detonate the powers of what self-destruction it so assiduously cultivates. On the whole we can say with confidence that the powers and creativeness which the political leaders

of the underdeveloped countries have so signally shown, spring from the fact that they represent something new in the world, the rejection of the role on which a dominant civilisation for centuries had built itself, and without which it sinks deeper and deeper into moral and political decay.

Whatever the faults and blunders of the underdeveloped countries, they represent something new in a decaying world, and the importance (not necessarily the judgment) of Lenin is that he first raised the banner and organised the revolt against what we have seen and experienced from 1914 to 1964. It is therefore a historic need to examine as scrupulously and objectively as possible what the leader of the first underdeveloped country seeking to make the transition thought; what he hoped to do, what he believed he had done, and the directions for the future he left behind him. There are many values in such a procedure when scrupulously carried out. One of them is that it does not imperatively demand an estimate of the success or relevancy of his achievements. That debate began before Lenin became a world figure, continues to the present day and will continue. The reader will maintain, develop or even change his own opinion. Yet the facts, the facts within the terms prescribed, are as clear as it is possible for the statements of the head of a revolutionary state to be. They are worth examination first because the internal problems posed and tackled are still the problems faced by all underdeveloped countries. In Africa no less than elsewhere.

Secondly, his view of the problems as he saw them and the solutions he proposed have disappeared from history as completely as if they were Etruscan hieroglyphics carved in stone. Lenin's recommendations to his party for the consolidation of the Soviet state were two:

1. The reconstruction of the governmental apparatus which, he said, despite the name soviet, was no more than an inheritance from tsarism;
2. The education of the almost illiterate peasantry.

There is no but or maybe. He says there are two essential points and then names these two. They cannot be said to be forgotten, because they have never been noticed.

The reason for this I can indicate with confidence and certainty born of a fully documented experience—my own. Twenty-five years ago, I wrote a history of the period.<sup>1</sup> I am certain that in preparation for the work, I read the relevant passages. But today I can find no concern with them on the numerous sympathetic pages I devoted to Lenin's ideas. I must simply have read them and passed them by. And my experience is that all other students of the period and writers on it have done the same. I was for years active among the leading Trotskyists: no Trotskyist that I knew ever even spoke far less wrote of them. I translated from the French nearly a thousand pages of the life of Stalin by Boris Souvarine, a book based on personal acquaintance with the Russian leaders and the Russian scene of Lenin's day, and mastery of all available material. These ideas of Lenin's are barely mentioned. In a wide acquaintance with Trotsky's voluminous writings on Lenin and revolutionary Russia, I have found no treatment of them. In authoritative and extensive examinations of the whole Russian Revolution by Isaac Deutscher and E. H. Carr, you find the same blank incomprehension. None of us says that Lenin was wrong, that these ideas marked a decline in his mental powers due to the illness which killed him. Simply the modern world is so constituted that it cannot take seriously such political recommendations as the construction of an honest and efficient government and the education of an illiterate peasant population. These were not accidental or psychological utopias. They were, in Lenin's view at least, the summation of his life's experience and studies, and his six years experience as leader of the Russian Revolution. A decent, honest government and the education of an illiterate peasantry. Those were the last words of Leninism.

The last period begins with the victory of the Russian Revolution over the invasion by Britain, France, the United States, Japan, etc. At its Tenth Congress in 1921, the Bolshevik Party posed the question: we have made a proletarian revolution aiming at socialism; we have for the moment defeated invasion, what shall we do now with this state of which we find ourselves the masters? The Leninist Bolshevik Party was the most highly politically educated and self-conscious party in history, and this debate is the greatest political debate that I know. The only thing to compare with it is the debate at Putney between Cromwell and Ireton on the one side, and the revolutionary soldiers of the army on the other. The problem of the Puritan revolutionaries was of the same scope as the problems that faced the Bolsheviks—now that they had defeated the former rulers, what political and social form were they to give, what were they to do with the country of which they were now the masters? We are concerned here only with tracing the growth of Lenin's ideas to their incredible climax.

The first thing to be noticed in this Marxist is his empiricism and his frank admission of it. For years before the revolution and immediately after October, Lenin had insisted that Russia, an underdeveloped peasant country, was not ready for socialism. Socialism he always saw as the organisation of an advanced economy by the state—the economy of advanced countries or some substantial part of them.

Now after three years of civil war the Bolsheviks found themselves with a national economy originally backward and now almost destroyed but organised on Communist lines. War Communism was the name it bore, and to the end of his days Lenin could not say definitely whether the Civil War had pushed them into it or whether in a rush of enthusiasm (initiated by the necessities of war) they had plunged into a Communist experiment for which the country was unsuited.<sup>2</sup> An examination of a country in the throes of revolution, any examination which is not aware that much that happens is unforeseen, unexpected, and cannot be logically explained even by the participants themselves, is sure, in Milton's phrase, to make confusion worse confounded. How they had got themselves into that hopeless confusion Lenin never worked out. The most urgent task was to get out of it, and when revolt broke out in Russia, with a startling abruptness, Lenin abandoned government regulation of peasant production and trade and introduced the New Economic Policy. Contrary to what is now popularly (and even learnedly) believed, to Lenin this economic policy was not in any sense of the word new. As far back as May, 1918,<sup>3</sup> he had urged on the Party and the population the necessity and validity of what he called state capitalism.<sup>4</sup> In April, 1921, speaking after the Tenth Party Congress, he quoted, literally, the 1918 speech to the extent of 10 pages.<sup>5</sup> He was always making references to this 1918 speech, and in the last months of his life, he referred to it again:

"Whenever I wrote about the New Economic Policy I always quoted the article on state capitalism which I wrote in 1918."

More indication of the way he thought, of the totally unprecedented problem which his government faced — unprecedented then — were some of the personal expressions, *obiter dicta* (and rebukes) which he introduced into the great debate of 1921. As is familiar, Trotsky, acutely aware of the magnitude of the economic crisis, wanted to make the trade unions a part of the state. That, he argued, was not only imperative for Russia of 1921, in a workers' state it was legitimate Marxism.

Equally well known is Lenin's refusal to accept this drastic regimentation of the Russian working class. Russia, he said, was not *quite* a workers' state. The debate is, or ought to be, familiar. What is not so well known is how, in a mass of confused action and conflicting proposals on all sides, Lenin arrived at his view of the root cause of the crisis in which the Party found itself. We babble sometimes with great profundity of analysis and learning (sometimes

with less) of the learned considerations by which politicians arrive at crucial decisions. Here is Lenin himself telling us what enlightened him, what gave him his insight into this historic moment in a great historical conjunction. "That is why, when the 'scrap started' at the Fifth All-Russian Conference of Trade Unions, November 2-6, 1920 (and that is exactly where it started), when immediately after that conference — no, I am mistaken, *during* that conference — Comrade Tomsky appeared before the Political Bureau in a high state of extraordinary excitement and, fully supported by Comrade Rudzutak, who is the calmest of men, began to relate that Comrade Trotsky at that conference had talked about 'shaking up' the trade unions, and that he, Tomsky, had opposed this — when this happened, I immediately and irrevocably made up my mind that the essence of the controversy was one of policy (i.e., the trade union policy of the Party) and that Comrade Trotsky was entirely wrong in his dispute with Comrade Tomsky over his policy of 'shaking up' the trade unions; for, *even if it were partly justified* by the 'new tasks and methods' (Trotsky's thesis 12), the policy of 'shaking up' the unions at the present time and in the present situation cannot be tolerated because it threatens a split."

This was the profoundly human and personal origin of the profundities of political and philosophical analyses which Lenin developed before the debate was ended.

Other observations are equally relevant to any consideration of politics at any time This about Trotsky's proposals:

"Take this controversy as you like, either as it arose at the Fifth All-Russian Conference of Trade Unions, or as it was presented and *directed* by Trotsky himself in his pamphlet-platform of December 15; you will see that Trotsky's *whole* approach, his whole trend, is wrong. He has failed to understand that it is necessary and possible to approach the trade unions as a school even when one raises the subject of 'Soviet trade unionism,' even when one speaks of production propaganda in general, and even when one puts the question of 'coalescence,' of the trade unions participating in the management of industry, *in the way* Trotsky does. And as regards the latter question, in the manner in which it is presented throughout Trotsky's pamphlet-platform, the mistake lies in the failure to understand that the trade unions are a *school of administrative-technical management of production*. Not 'on the one hand a school and on the other hand something different' but *from all aspects*, in the present controversy, with the question as now presented by Trotsky, *trade unions are a school*, a school of unity, a school of solidarity, a school for learning how to protect one's interests, a school of management, a school of administration. Instead of understanding and rectifying this fundamental error of Comrade Trotsky's, Comrade Bukharin made a ridiculous little amendment: 'On the one hand . . . on the other hand.'

"Let us approach the question still more concretely. Let us see what the present trade unions are as an 'apparatus' for the management of production. We have seen from incomplete returns that about nine hundred workers — members and delegates of trade unions — are engaged in the management of production. Increase this figure tenfold if you will, or even a hundredfold; as a concession to you and in order to explain your fundamental mistake, let us even assume such an incredibly rapid 'advance' in the near future — even then we get an insignificant number of those directly engaged in *management* compared with the general mass of six million members of trade unions. And from this it is still more clearly evident that to concentrate all attention on the 'leading stratum' as Trotsky does, to talk about the role of the trade unions in production and about managing production, without taking into account the fact that 98½ % *are learning* (6,000,000 — 90,000 = 5,910,000 = 98½ % of the total) *and will have to learn, for a long time*, means committing

a fundamental mistake. Not school *and* management, but *school of management*."

This is Lenin's thesis all through. The backwardness of Russia imposed on the Party the necessity of teaching and above all teaching themselves. We have to administer. But the main business is to teach.

"Even in 10 years time we shall probably have to say that not all our Party and trade union workers have sufficient industrial training, just as in 10 years time not all the Party, trade union and War Department workers will have sufficient military training. But we have made a *beginning* with industrial training by the fact that about a thousand workers, members and delegates of trade unions, participate in the work of management boards, and manage factories, head offices and higher bodies. The fundamental principle of 'industrial training' of the training of *ourselves*, of the old underground workers and professional journalists, is that we ourselves set to work, to study our own practical experience in the most careful and detailed manner in accordance with the rule: 'Measure your cloth seven times before you cut.' Persistent, slow, careful, practical, and businesslike testing of what this thousand has done; still more careful and practical correcting of their work and advancing only after the usefulness of the given method, the given system of management, the given proportion, the given selection of persons, etc, has been fully proved — such is the basic, fundamental, absolute rule of 'industrial training'; and it is precisely this rule that Comrade Trotsky breaks with all his theses, the whole of his pamphlet-platform, are such that by their mistakes they have distracted the attention and forces of the Party from practical 'production work' to empty and vapid word-spinning."

For Lenin the backwardness of an underdeveloped country imposed on the Party the necessity of teaching and above all teaching themselves.

It is not my business here to go into any detail about Russian economic development, and more particularly the development of agriculture. That would involve controversy of which there is enough already and material abounding. I shall stick to the continuous development and progression of Lenin's political ideas. On October 17, 1921, he delivered a Report to the Second All-Russian Congress of Political Education Departments. Now of all political organisations, the Russian Bolshevik Government believed in the necessity of the political education of the Russian people, especially in the new doctrines of Marxism, of socialism. The operative word here is *not* Marxism; it is *not* socialism. It is education.

Lenin was coldly if not brutally realistic.

"Raising the level of culture is one of our most immediate tasks. And this is the task of the Political Education Departments, if they can serve the cause of 'political education,' which is the title they have adopted for themselves. It is not difficult to adopt a title, but how about acting up to it? Let us hope that after this Congress we shall have precise information about this. A commission for the liquidation of illiteracy was set up on July 19, 1920. Before coming to this congress, I deliberately read the decree establishing this commission. It says: All-Russian Commission for the Liquidation of Illiteracy. Let us hope that after this congress we shall receive information about what has been done in this sphere, and in how many gubernias, that we shall receive a precise report. But the very fact that it was found necessary to set up an Extraordinary Commission for the Liquidation of Illiteracy shows that we are (what is the wildest term I can use for it?), well, something like semi-savages, because in a country that was not semi-savage it would be considered a disgrace to have set up an Extraordinary Commission for the Liquidation of Illiteracy. In such countries illiteracy is liquidated in schools. There they have tolerable schools, where people are taught. What are they taught? First of all they are taught to read and write. But if this elementary

problem has not yet been solved, it is ridiculous to talk about a New Economic Policy."

The reader will, I hope, allow me to interject here a solitary observation. The day that I hear of one political leader of an underdeveloped country speaking in these terms to a political gathering of his own people (and publishing it), my confidence in the future of underdeveloped countries would take a great bound forward.

Russia, you must remember, was a country of many universities, publishing houses, a wide variety of established journals. Beginning with Pushkin, born in 1801, right up to Tchekov, who died in 1904, Russia had produced men who even outside of Russia were acknowledged as the greatest artists of the nineteenth century. All this Lenin ignored. His concern was the people, the common people.

"First of all they are taught to read and write. But if this elementary problem has not been solved, it is ridiculous to talk about a New Economic Policy."

This was no chance remark, no individual aside. Lenin then proceeded to make his first summation of the three principal enemies now confronting Soviet Russia "irrespective of one's departmental functions."

The three enemies were: "the first — Communist vanity; the second enemy — illiteracy; and the third enemy — bribery." The thing to note is that none of these are psychological appraisals about the weakness of men, not the vices of the instincts (according to the depth psychologists), nor the lack of experience in democracy (beloved by the Western liberal), nor the lack of character (beloved by the European reactionary). These are strictly social defects of a historical origin. The vanity Lenin speaks about is the political conceit of a member of the governing party, employed in government institution, who believes that he can solve the urgent problems affecting millions of people by issuing government decrees.

Next illiteracy. "An illiterate person," Lenin decrees, "is outside politics, he must first of all be taught the alphabet. Without that there can be no politics. Without that, there are only rumours, gossip, fables and prejudices, but not politics."

Finally, there is bribery, or to use the more modern and comprehensive term — corruption. Corruption, in Lenin's view, rises on the soil of illiteracy.

Some time after this speech, Lenin grew physically much worse, but before he took to his bed, never to leave it again, he was able to address the Party Congress once more, and in the course of this address, he referred to the mess the government was in, and the responsibility for it. *Nobody was responsible!*

"It would be unfair to say that the responsible Communists do not approach their tasks in a conscientious manner. The overwhelming majority of them, ninety-nine percent, are not only conscientious: they proved their loyalty to the revolution under the most difficult conditions before the fall of tsarism and after the revolution; they literally risked their lives. Therefore it would be radically wrong to seek for the cause in this. We need a cultured approach to the simplest affairs of state. It must be understood that is a matter of state, of commerce, and if obstacles arise one must be able to overcome them and take proceedings against those who are guilty of red tape. I think the proletarian courts will be able to punish, but in order to punish, the culprits must be found. I assure you that in this case no culprits will be found. Look into this business, all of you: no one is guilty, all we see is a lot of fuss and bustle and nonsense . . . Nobody has the ability to approach the business properly; nobody understands that affairs of state must be approached not this way, but that way."

What Lenin was looking at were the defects of a system, a society, a backward society which corrupted good men.



Before we come to the last words, the summary of a lifetime, we have to know what he was seeing — only then shall we be able to understand what he said and why. At the Eleventh Party Congress, Lenin told Russia (and the world) his reflections on where Soviet Russia had reached and where it was going.

“Well, we have lived through a year, the state is in our hands; but has it operated the New Economic Policy in our way during the past year? No. But we refuse to admit this. It did not operate in our way. How did it operate? The machine refused to obey the hand that guided it. It was like an automobile that is going, not in the direction of the man who is driving it, but in the direction desired by someone else, as if it were being driven by some secret, illegal hand, God knows whose, perhaps that of a profiteer, or of a private capitalist, or both. Be that as it may, the car is not going in the direction the man at the wheel imagines.”

We now approach his last writings — three articles.

The three articles are the climax of Lenin's reflections on what the underdeveloped country was to do with its unprecedented control of the economy. These are reflections on what we must remember was an entirely new and entirely unprecedented phenomenon. It began in 1921; in 1922 illness drove Lenin from his desk. By the early months of 1923, he had lost the power of speech, and his last three articles represent his last will and testament. We do not assume any loss of intellectual power. The very last article of the three, “Better Fewer, but Better,” is perhaps as fine a production (and as famous) as ever came from his pen. The articles contain much that is new, either never said before or giving entirely new emphasis to objectives stated before but not made fundamental. He had no opportunity to translate these ideas into political action. (We have therefore to watch the articles, not only in themselves, but in the light of what has happened since.)

The first article, dated January 4-6, 1923, is entitled, “On Cooperation.” Lenin states at once that precisely because of the New Economic Policy, the cooperative movement “acquires absolutely exceptional significance” — such words he did not use lightly. His new point is that since state power is in the hands of the working class — and he at once concretises this claim, “since this state power owns all the means of production” — the only task that remains to be done is to organise the population in cooperative societies. It is no wonder that from that day to this the words and the new ideas contained in them seem to elude, to baffle all commentators. Lenin is very serious, for he goes on to say immediately, “When the population is organised in cooperative societies to the utmost, the socialism which formerly was legitimately ridiculed, scorned and treated with contempt by those who were justly convinced of the need for the class struggle, for the struggle for political power, etc., automatically achieves its aims. But not all comrades appreciate the enormous, boundless significance that the organisation of Russia in cooperative societies now acquires.”

Enormous, boundless. He had not spoken about the cooperatives like that before. In fact, speaking on the Food Tax in April 14, 1921, he had given a distinctly different appreciation of the cooperatives.<sup>6</sup> Cooperatives have now become all that is necessary for the building of socialism, first from the aspect of principle, and secondly, underlining the words, Lenin makes clear what he is getting at and the reason for this new orientation: from the aspect of the transition to the new order (socialism) he has found “the means that will be *simplest, easiest, and most intelligible* for the peasantry.”

This for Lenin is not only important. Everything else, economic planning, the organisation of the state, is subordinate to the response of the small peasants, who Lenin will later remind us constitute nine-tenths of the population of Russia. They are what matters. “It is one thing to draw up fantastic plans for building socialism by means of all sorts of workers' associations; but

it is quite another thing to learn to build it practically, in such a way that every small peasant may take part in the work of construction." Lenin now makes a criticism of the N. E. P. which he has mentioned at various times but which he now states was the central mistake in that perpetually discussed new orientation. The mistake was that they forgot to think about the cooperatives, they are underestimated, their 'enormous significance' is forgotten. No directive on the Russian economy was ever raised by Lenin with greater force and greater emphasis. None has been so signally ignored. Before we are finished we shall see why.

As was his way, especially when introducing something new, Lenin now proceeds to deepen the argument. Every new social system arises with the assistance of a new class. The new class he has in mind for the new Russia is the peasantry. The state must give the cooperative peasants a bonus but not for any kind of cooperative trade. The assistance, Lenin says, he underlines the words, must be for cooperative trade in which "*real masses of the population really take part.*" The whole point is to "verify the intelligence behind it, to verify its quality."

Lenin knew that the kind of participation he has in mind is today beyond the peasant population. It will take one or two decades. It will require universal literacy, the population must acquire the habit of reading books. (Here we see why in his address to the Political Education Departments, he laid such heavy stress on illiteracy.) The Russian peasant trades in an Asiatic manner, he has to learn to trade in a European manner. This task of instructing them he recommends should be undertaken with new enthusiasm. The emphasis now must be on educational work. There is some highly original and highly significant phrasing: if we confine ourselves "entirely to economic internal relations," the weight of emphasis is certainly shifted to educational work. The literacy Lenin is now talking about is not primarily concerned with politics or what in the English-speaking world is known as culture. It is the precondition of economic progress.

How unambiguous Lenin is can be seen in the final paragraph in this brief article. Two main tasks constitute the epoch. The first we shall come to in a moment. But the second drives home what Lenin believes he has now securely established.

"The second is to conduct educational work among the peasants. And the economic object of this educational work among the peasants is to organise them in cooperative societies. If the whole of the peasantry were organised in cooperatives, we should be standing firmly with both feet on the soil of socialism."

There are immense difficulties in the way of this cultural revolution but the difficulties are "... of a purely educational (for we are illiterate) and material character (for in order to be cultured we must have reached a certain level of development of the material means of production, we must have a certain material base)."

Let us carefully avoid what may be viewed sceptically as a biased interpretation. There is no need to interpret, we can only presume that Lenin means what he says.

How deadly serious (and systematic) he was is proved by the next article which is dated three weeks later, January 23. We remember that he defined the number of tasks which constituted the epoch as two. Educational work among the peasants had been the second. The first had been in its way quite as uncompromising and quite as new.

"The two main tasks confront us which constitute the epoch: the first is to reconstruct our apparatus, which is utterly useless, and which we took over in its entirety from the preceding epoch; during the five years of struggle we did not, and could not, make any serious alterations in it."

It is to this reconstruction of the governmental apparatus that Lenin now addresses himself. The form it takes is a series of proposals addressed directly to the Twelfth Party Congress. As we grasp the precision of the proposals we see that if Lenin had been well enough to attend the Congress, these proposals would have dominated its energies and attention in the same way that in 1921 the Trade Union question had dominated the Tenth Congress. The first thing Lenin does is to condemn the whole soviet government as nothing more than a survival of the old tsarist government (notoriously, by the way, the most backward government in Western Europe).

"With the exception of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, our state apparatus is very largely a survival of the old one, and has least of all undergone serious change. It has only been slightly repainted on the surface, but in all other things it is a typical relic of our old state apparatus."

That is where we begin; there should be no minimising of what Lenin means to say. These are soviets, and the government departments are headed by Bolsheviks and Communists. But the whole thing is rotten. It is not that the new soviet government is unworkable. It is that under the thin covering of new forms the old tsarist apparatus still remains. Thus in the view of Lenin (a view entirely unique) it was not the new Bolshevism but the old tsarism from which Russia, after six years, was bleeding. The regime faces a crisis comparable to the most dangerous moments in the Civil War. We have to bear in mind the article on cooperation. The tremendous task posed there will have to be carried out by the new government that Lenin proposes. Lenin proposes that the Congress attempt the reorganisation of one government department, just one, and this one, the Workers and Peasants Inspection. And here we run right up against one of the great historical perversions of our times. The Stalin and Trotsky conflict and the debate which has followed it has confused and even obscured what Lenin tried to do at this Congress. His proposals and the article that followed particularised Stalin as the most offending bureaucrat, and his department, the Workers and Peasants Inspection, as the most offensive department in the government. But Stalin is not and never was the main issue, though it was in those terms that Trotsky and Stalin represented the conflict to Russia and the whole world. Lenin was not concerned with Stalin but with the whole Russian apparatus of government. And we must know what the Workers and Peasants Inspection was intended to be and why it is the whole apparatus of government Lenin has in mind and not primarily Stalin.

In January 1920, long before the Civil War was over, Lenin had addressed a memorandum to Stalin on his Commissariat, copies of which had been sent to other members of the government. Instructions on the reorganisation of the Workers and Peasants Inspection had been issued by the Central Committee. Lenin wanted Stalin to add the following points:

The whole Workers and Peasants Inspection should aim at abolishing itself. Its function should be to introduce a section of the Workers and Peasants Inspection in all departments of state control and then cease to exist as a separate department.

Lenin's additions read suspiciously like a totally new reconstruction of whatever the Central Executive may have had in mind. The object of the department is to enlist all the toilers, men "and particularly women" in the work of the Workers and Peasants Inspection.

Local authorities should compile lists of all (except office employees) who should take part in the work of the inspection in rotation. The department should exercise "wider" control over the accounting of products, goods, stores, materials, fuel, etc. Lenin obviously had in mind a continuously spreading inspection and checking of every sphere of government by workers, especially women, "all women."

Gradually peasants were to be invited from the local districts to take part in the work of the state control at the centre, Peasants were to be invited to take part "unfailingly," "non-party peasants."

Lenin may have been a utopian dreamer. That question is not being debated here. What is certain is that he did not have utopian ideas before and while he aimed at power, only to be transformed by power into a one-party totalitarian dictator. If his ideas were utopian then it is clear that after six years of power, he turned to them as the sole solution of the mess into which the soviet government was sinking, had already sunk. That he saw the problem as Trotsky vs. Stalin is a totally false view of this which seemed to him the greatest crisis the soviet state had hitherto faced. The Central Control Commission was a purely party body which was responsible for the discipline and control of party members all over the country.

Lenin proposed to amalgamate this party body with the government departments of the Workers and Peasants Inspection.

The Congress was to elect from 75-100 workers and peasants as new members of the Central Control Commission. These elected persons were to be selected on the same principles, subjected to the same tests, as the members of the Central Committee. This severe selection was due to the fact that those chosen were to enjoy the same rights as the members of the Central Committee.

Let us see where we are now. For this is Lenin's organisational counterpart to a political policy such as the education of tens of millions of illiterate peasants. We have now organised in one body what was originally two distinct bodies, to which is added a new one. The three bodies are:

(a) The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party which in reality politically controls all aspects of life in Russia. Its most important sub-committee is the Political Bureau, the actual rulers of Russia. There is also an Organisation Committee, a Secretariat, etc.

(b) The Central Control Commission of the Party so far has had nothing to do with government. It will have 75-100 new members, workers and peasants. Lenin proposes that the staff of the Workers and Peasants Commissariat should be reduced in number to three or four hundred. This reduced personnel should be put to the strictest tests in regard to a) conscientiousness, b) knowledge of the state apparatus. They should also undergo a special test in regard to their knowledge of the principles of the scientific organisation of labour in general and of administrative and office work in particular. Then comes a revealing admonition. These highly trained, carefully chosen and specially paid members of the staff should "perform purely secretarial work" for the members (workers and peasants) of the Workers and Peasants Inspection and the new members of the Central Control Commission. The workers and peasants are to do the inspection. The staff is to do what they are told.

If Lenin's ideas were utopian, he was completely and wholeheartedly utopian. What does Lenin expect to gain by this organisational reconstruction?

Two things:

First the prestige of the Workers and Peasants Inspection will be enormously increased as these workers and peasants go around inspecting and checking the activities of all government functionaries. They will have the authority and meet with the respect that will come to them from being full members of the ruling organisation of Russia.

Secondly, the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission in their two-monthly meetings will more and more assume the character and function of a superior Party Conference. This will increase the "methodical, expedient and systematic" organisation of its work and it will help to add to its contacts with really broad masses.

This is Lenin all over, the broad comprehensive democratic aims and the tight but tentative organisational structure by which the work will be begun. How will it work out? That would be seen. His whole method was summed up in his quotation from Napoleon on War: "*On s'engage et puis on voit.*" Napoleon was the most meticulous planner of military campaigns who ever lived. But after the plan was made: you engage and then you see.

If we want to understand the stage at which Lenin's ideas had reached (and also the past and the future development of an underdeveloped country), one must now pay special attention to the violent, absolutely unbridled condemnation and abuse which Lenin continues to shower on the Russian apparatus of government after six years of Bolshevik rule. It is not Stalin who is responsible for this. The whole party is responsible. The enemy consists of those who advocate "the preservation of our apparatus in the impossible and pre-revolutionary form in which it exists to the present day."

Lenin makes other technical recommendations, but the main point of his proposals is the reorganisation proposed. It seems that the proposal was not eagerly received and by March 2, Lenin unloosed his consuming detestation and repudiation of the Russian form of government, a repudiation which had been disciplined but ill-concealed in the original proposals. The first five years of the Bolshevik Russian Revolution have "crammed their heads with disbelief and scepticism." As a socialist republic the culture of Western European bourgeois states would be too modest an aim. But as a start they should be satisfied with getting rid of "the particularly crude types of pre-bourgeois, bureaucratic or serf-culture" which they have. The present form of government in Russia is "so deplorable, not to say outrageous" that "We must come to our senses in time." The Russian apparatus does not deserve the name of socialist, soviet, etc. Such elements of decent government that they have are ridiculously small and to build a decent apparatus will take "many, many years."

To continue with this drastic criticism of the soviet government, the most drastic ever made, Lenin tells his party members that "we must set ourselves the task first of learning, second of learning, and third of learning."

"We have been bustling for five years trying to improve the state apparatus, but it was mere bustle, which during the five years, only proved that it was useless, or even futile, or even harmful. This bustle created the impression that we were working; as a matter of fact, it only clogged up our institutions and our brains."

This is the road that they must follow.

"It is better to get good human material in two years, or even in three years, than to work in haste without hope of getting any at all."

Lenin reaches lengths of advocacy and desperation hitherto untouched by him. Nothing that might happen in Russia would have surprised the man who wrote:

"I know that it will be hard to follow this rule and apply it to our conditions. I know that the opposite rule will force its way through a thousand loopholes. I know that enormous resistance will have to be offered, that devilish persistence will have to be displayed, that in the first year at least, the work in this connection will be hellishly hard. Nevertheless, I am convinced that only by such work shall we be able to achieve our aim, and only by achieving this aim shall we create a republic that is really worthy of the name Soviet, Socialist, etc."

The extremity of what might legitimately be called desperation is reached in the following sentence:

"If we cannot arm ourselves with patience, if we are not prepared to spend several years on this task, we had better not start on it."

This is not an ill-considered angry remark. It follows directly upon this sober evaluation.

"Either it is not worthwhile undertaking another of the numerous reorganisations that we have had, and therefore we must give up the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection as hopeless, or we really set to work, by slow, difficult and unusual methods, and testing these methods over and over again, to create something exemplary, which will win the respect of all and sundry for its merits, and only because rank and calling demand it."

If the party is not ready to throw itself into this gigantic task, with the necessary energy and patience, then it had better leave it alone. The government apparatus of a country was not something to play with.

We will not go into Lenin's exceptionally severe requirements for the training of the functionaries needed for this gigantic and, even in the eyes of its founder, almost impossible operation. One thing we can say. It was a task which he saw as big as the October Revolution. It was possible that it could be carried through, at least initiated, projected on lines which would have inspired the nation with a new national purpose. But only Lenin could have done it. Today, after forty years, I have never read or heard anyone who seems to have understood even what Lenin had in mind. What we have to understand is the tremendous break with all his previous conceptions — a break in its way as gigantic as the break in March 1917, when with the perspective of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and the new conception of power to the soviets, on the way to the proletarian-socialist revolution. Before we conclude with the unmistakable evidence, both positive and negative, what he said and what he did not say, of this dynamic new perspective, we think it would be well to establish once and for all the unparalleled gravity of the situation as he saw it:

"In essence, the question stands as follows: either we prove now that we have learnt something about state construction (we ought to have learnt something in five years) or we prove that we have not matured for that sufficiently. If the latter is the case, it is not worth while starting on the task."

What then were the changes in the basic and guiding ideas within which Lenin had worked certainly from 1905 and particularly since 1917? He always believed and often said that any serious and notable change in the social and political constitution of Russia came from the proletariat or from the masses, only when the masses take part does real politics begin. This was his creed. Now on the face of the threatening catastrophe of all he had worked for, he faced the fact that what was required the proletariat could not do. What elements, he asked, do they have for guiding this new apparatus instead of the pre-bourgeois, bureaucratic serf-culture which they had? "Only two." What were these?

"First the workers who are absorbed in the struggle for Socialism. These elements are not sufficiently educated. They would like to build a better apparatus for us, but they do not know how to do it. They cannot do it. They have not yet developed the culture that is required for this; and it is precisely culture that is required for this."

That was for Lenin the end of a road. The workers on whom he depended for everything creative, everything new, were incapable of initiating this mighty reorganisation. He had indicated in what way the energies of peasants could be channelled into the social reconstruction of Russia. But neither peasant nor proletariat could reconstruct, reorganise the pre-bourgeois, bureaucratic, serf-culture with which Soviet Russia was still saddled.

"Secondly, we have the element of knowledge, education and training, but to a degree that is ridiculously small compared with all other countries."

Lenin recognised very clearly what he was saying and what he was leaving unsaid. What he was saying was this:

"For this purpose the very best of what there is in our social system must be utilised with the greatest caution, thoughtfulness and knowledge in building up the new Commissariat.

"For this purpose the best elements in our social system, such as firstly the advanced workers, and secondly the real enlightened elements, for whom we can vouch that they will not take the word for the deed, and will not utter a single word that goes against their conscience, must not shrink before any difficulties, must not shrink from any struggle, in order to achieve the object they have seriously set themselves."

This utter dependence on the subjective element, on the personal qualities of individuals, for so gigantic a social task, that was something new and this perhaps explains Lenin's desperation: if you are not going to tackle it with a full consciousness of the magnitude of the efforts required, it would be better not to tackle it at all.

But what you will look for in vain in these three articles is any reference to the soviet structure of government. This had been Lenin's constant indication of what Russia had brought new to the world, of what was the strength of the Russian Revolution. Now that was gone. For the new peasantry, he was looking to the cooperatives, for the new apparatus of government he was looking not even to the party as a whole but to the best elements in both government and party. Perhaps the illusionary character of these ideas, the last explosion so far of what had begun in 1789, is proved by the fact that not only did they make no impact on the Russia of Lenin's time, they have completely disappeared from the estimates and details about what was Lenin's real contribution to modern politics and modern thought. And yet the article, "Better Fewer but Better," is to this day one of his famous articles. It was in this article that he wrote the famous words: the "outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., constitute the overwhelming majority of the population that, during the past few years, has been drawn into the struggle for its emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense the final victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured." Russia, he ended, had to build an economic and efficient government and hold on. "That is how I link up in my mind the general plan of our work, of our policy, or our tactics, of our strategy, with the task of the reorganised Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. This is what, in my opinion, justifies the exceptional attention which we must devote to the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection in order to raise it to an exceptionally high level, to give it a head with the rights of the Central Committee, etc., etc.

"And this justification is that, only by purging our apparatus to the utmost, by cutting out everything that is not absolutely necessary, shall we be certain of holding on. If we do that we shall be able to hold on, not on the level of a small-peasant country, not on the level of this universal narrowness, but on the ever-rising level of large-scale machine industry.

"These are the lofty tasks that I dream of for our Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. That is why I am planning for it the amalgamation of the most authoritative party body with an 'ordinary People's Commissariat'."

Lenin always did his best to guard against being misunderstood. We especially, of the underdeveloped countries, should not misunderstand his views. We may claim that they are utopian, visionary, unrealistic, unworkable, a fantasy. We should bear in mind that these were exactly the charges that the majority of his colleagues made against him in March 1917, when he arrived in Russia, and, almost alone, hurled the masses of Russia at the bourgeois regime and initiated a new epoch in world history, with the slogan, "All power to the Soviets."

1. *World Revolution: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International, 1917-1936.* Secker & Warburg, London 1937.

2. "The peasantry demands a practical demonstration of the ability of the workers who own the factories, the works, industry, to organise exchange with it. On the other hand, an immense agrarian country with bad means of communication, boundless spaces, different climates, different agricultural conditions, etc., inevitably presupposes a certain freedom of turnover for local agriculture and local industry, on a local scale. In this respect we made many mistakes; we went too far; we went too far along the road of nationalising trade and industry, of stopping local turnover. Was this a mistake? Undoubtedly.

"In this connection we did much that was simply wrong, and it would be a great crime not to see and realise that we did not keep within proper limits. Some of the things, however, we were compelled to do by necessity; up to now we have been living under such conditions of furious and incredibly severe war that we had no other alternative but to act in a wartime manner in the sphere of economics. The miracle was that a ruined country was able to hold out in such a war. The miracle did not come from heaven, it arose out of the economic interests of the working class and the peasantry, who performed this miracle by their mass enthusiasm; this miracle repulsed the landlords and the capitalists. At the same time, it is an undoubted fact, and we must reveal it in our agitation and propaganda, that we went further than was necessary theoretically and politically."

"Report on the Tax in Kind at the Tenth Party Congress."  
*Selected Works*, Vol. IX, pp. 112-3.

3. *Selected Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 351-78.

4. *Selected Works*, Vol. VIII, pp. 165-76.

5. *Selected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 406.

6. "Under the conditions prevailing in Russia at present, freedom and rights for the cooperative societies mean freedom and rights for capitalism. It would be stupid and criminal to close our eyes to this obvious truth."



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*Much of the literature listed here is available from*

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*A History of Pan-African Revolt*. Originally published in London in 1936 as *A History of Negro Revolt*, republished with a long appendix bringing it up to date by Drum and Spear Press, Washington, D.C., \$2.50.

*Notes on Dialectics*. Written in 1948, issued in rough form in 1966, it will be published in Detroit in 1970 as a mimeographed book. A study of Hegel and the Marxian dialectic.

*State Capitalism and World Revolution*. First published in 1950. Third edition, 1969, Facing Reality, Detroit, \$2.50. A fundamental Marxist analysis of the current stage of capitalism.

*Mariners, Renegades and Castaways, 1953*. Available from Facing Reality, Detroit, \$1.00. A study of Herman Melville and *Moby Dick*.

*Facing Reality* (with G. Lee and P. Chalieu). 1958, Facing Reality, Detroit, \$.50. The Hungarian Revolution and the marking of a new stage in world politics.

*Party Politics in the West Indies*, Trinidad, 1961. O.P.

*Beyond a Boundary*, 1963. Hutchinson (London). New cloth and paper editions are now in print. A study of cricket, West Indian nationalism and British culture.

*Modern Politics*, Published in Port of Spain, Trinidad in 1960, suppressed by the Williams regime for many years. Now available from University Place Bookshop, New York City, \$2.50. Six lectures presenting the socialist perspective within the sweep of western civilization.

*Nkrumah Then and Now*. Unpublished. A study of Nkrumah and the development of Ghana.

In progress are works on the life of Lenin and on the life of George Padmore, among others.

## PAMPHLETS

- The Case for West-Indian Self Government.* Published in London in 1936. Available from University Place Bookshop in New York City, \$1.00.
- Balance Sheet*, with F. Forest and M. Glberman, 1947. Facing Reality (Detroit), \$1.00. A critique of U.S. Trotskyism 1941-1947.
- Every Cook Can Govern*, 1956. Facing Reality, Detroit, \$.20. A study of democracy in ancient Greece.
- Federation*, 1960, Trinidad, O.P. Why Federation of the former British West Indies failed.
- Marxism and the Intellectuals*, 1962. Facing Reality (Detroit), \$.25.
- Kwame Nkrumah and the West Indies*, 1962, Trinidad, O.P. An Exchange of letters.
- Wilson Harris, a Philosophical Approach*, undated, Extra-Mural Dept., University of the West Indies, Trinidad. A study of the Guyanese novelist.
- Lenin, Trotsky and the Vanguard Party*, 1964, Facing Reality (Detroit), \$.15. Three short selections.

## MIMEOGRAPHED

- Letter on Organization*, 1963, Facing Reality (Detroit), \$.25. Problems of a Marxist organization.
- Perspectives and Proposals*, 1966, Facing Reality (Detroit), \$.50. Further notes on organization.
- Education, Agitation, Propaganda*, First published in 1943, reissued in 1968. Problems of developing an American Marxism.
- The Making of the Caribbean People*, 1969, available from S. James, 20 Staverton Rd., London, N.W.2, 2 shillings, sixpence. Guest lecture at the 2nd Conference on West Indian Affairs, Montreal, Canada, 1966.
- Black Power*, 1969, same as above, also 2 shillings, sixpence.

NOTE: This bibliography is necessarily incomplete. There are pamphlets used in particular struggles that have disappeared from view. It does not include samplings of the many periodicals edited by James in England, in the United States and in the West Indies. It does not include a huge number of articles that have appeared in periodicals all over the world, including *Radical America* and *Freedomways*. It does not include a vast correspondence, much of which, hopefully, will eventually be published. It does not include many lectures which have been recorded but not transcribed and published. And, it is very much a work in progress which is being added to constantly.

M.G.

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