

NEW EXPANDED EDITION

**Frantz Fanon, Soweto &
American Black Thought**

by Lou Turner and John Alan

- **New Introduction/Overview** by Raya Dunayevskaya, Lou Turner, John Alan
- **New Appendices** on Negritude and Language by Rene Depestre and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, on Grenada by Raya Dunayevskaya
- **Afterword: Marxist-Humanist Perspectives**

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News & Letters
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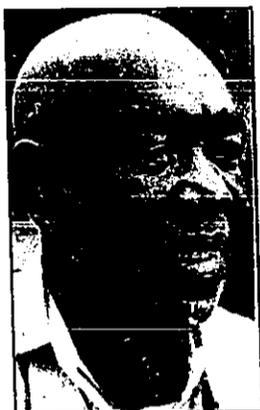
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On the cover:
*Rally of African workers in Durban at the
founding of COSATU (Congress of
South African Trade Unions) on Dec. 1,
1985; portrait of Frantz Fanon.*

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Dedicated to the Memory of



Charles Denby



Steve Biko

Black History Month
February 1986

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Above: On Nov. 30, 1985, 900 trade union delegates representing 33 unions founded COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) in Durban and elected as their first president Elijah Barayi, a labor and political activist from the powerful National Union of Mineworkers.



Left: Nearly 1,000 youths from Miami's Liberty City, who came to be known as the "little shorties," rallied to protest President Carter's visit at a Black community center on June 6, 1980.

New Introduction/ Overview

by

Raya Dunayevskaya,
Lou Turner and John Alan

I

So great is the power of the Idea of freedom that it has shaken apartheid South Africa to its foundation. The struggles for freedom against that totalitarian leadership's armed-to-the-teeth, undeclared, savage civil war upon the unarmed Black majority population are endless. The point now is: What to do to correct this fantastic imbalance of forces? How to recognize the freedom idea itself as a great force of Reason in this life and death struggle? What can be done internationally to solidarize with it?

The first vantage point of international solidarity is the recognition that the African freedom struggles are, to begin with, continent-wide. There is no part of Africa—North, South, East or West, whether they be newly decolonized African nations or even the Bantustans of South Africa—where freedom struggles are not pivotal. This shows that the Idea of freedom becomes actual force when it becomes embodied within the new, live, human forces of revolution. This is fact not only across the continent of Africa but throughout the whole world. In South Africa itself the new forces include youth so young that the present struggle has been widely referred to as "the children's revolution." That this characterizes also the Black dimension in the United States was evident when the first of three uprisings in Miami (1980, 1981, 1982) was referred to as the revolt of "the little shorties."

The present U.S. movement's support for divestment, as well as the support throughout the world, is good, but is by no means the whole of the imperative activity needed.

The impulse for the first edition of this pamphlet was the fact that

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in 1976, the year before he was imprisoned and murdered, Steve Biko had declared the affinity of Black Consciousness in South Africa with American Black thought and with Frantz Fanon's philosophy of revolution, which Fanon had called a "new humanism." *News & Letters* had been detailing and analyzing all the objective events in South Africa and had turned its November 1977 lead article over to "Steve Biko Speaks for Himself." Charles Denby, the editor of *News & Letters*, followed this up by proposing that we develop the whole concept of the affinity of thought of these three dimensions into a special pamphlet to be entitled: *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought*. The events—of freedom struggles and of counter-revolution—from 1978 to 1986 have compelled this present expanded edition.

The year of our first edition, 1978, was the period when Denby was finishing a new expanded edition of his autobiography, *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*. Here is how he articulated his concept of that worldwide affinity: "What both Fanon and Biko are saying is that the struggle for freedom has no national boundaries, and everywhere that you have a battle for human liberty helps the worldwide movement for freedom" (p. 293).

As against this, America's imperialist tentacles have re-extended to the Philippines and the Caribbean, as well as re-intensified at home as "pure" capitalism revealing its basic racism. Reaganism—in turning the clock back on what was gained through the turbulent 1960s on civil rights, in the anti-Vietnam war movement, on youth and education—revealed its racism most blatantly by its treatment of the Haitian refugees as criminals. This was done in total disregard of the U.S. Black movement's identification with the Haitians.

In January 1982, *News & Letters* featured a front page "Worker's Journal" column entitled: "Haitians dehumanized at Krome." There Charles Denby quoted the words of Larry Mahoney, the former spokesperson of the U.S. State Department at the Krome detention facility: "I saw women sleeping under blankets so soiled and threadbare that I mistook them for the contents of vacuum-cleaner bags. . . In the end I found I could no longer cover for the indignities my government countenanced, and quit in frustration." ("Inside Krome," *Miami Herald*, Jan. 10, 1982).

This was the period of the three Black uprisings in Miami. While these didn't seem to be "directly" related to the brutal treatment that the Haitian refugees were receiving at Krome (since they were opposing the conditions of Black life right here in the United States), the truth is that the Black community in Miami, and indeed throughout the U.S., identified with the Haitians. Which is why Denby had concluded his report as follows: "It cannot be an accident that these refugees have been treated this way because they are Black. . . The point is that it is

right here and now—in the United States today—that Haitian refugees are being treated like this. We cannot remain silent, we need to speak out, to act to put an end to these atrocities."

And in this same issue of *News & Letters* John Alan headlined his "Black-Red" column, "Poland, Haiti: Freedom indivisible." We participated in the march of 2,000 in Brooklyn, under the slogan, "Hey, hey, USA, stop supporting Duvalier!"

The "little shorties" in Miami were proof of what we had underscored in the 1978 edition when we wrote:

"Contrary to the reports in the white press, Black America's *actual rejection of white capitalistic-imperialistic exploitation, with or without Black lackeys, is, at one and the same time, a time-bomb that is sure to explode, and a time for thinking and readying for action.*"

As ground for the present high stage of revolt, whether it be in South Africa or the United States, it becomes all the more important to remember the achievements of the 1960s and the early 1970s. We are not referring only to the turbulence of the 1960s in general, but rather to the fact that it reached a climax in 1968 only to "perish," that is to say, the revolution remained unfinished. But that was not death. On the contrary, beginning with 1969, there were all sorts of new objective developments; and though one had to work under the whip of counter-revolution, the new forces of revolution did not separate their actions from their hunger and search for theory, a philosophy of revolution to go with the actual revolution.

In South Africa, in 1969, the new activity saw the dockworkers on strike win support for the first time from white students in Cape Town and Witwatersrand. In the U.S., along with new wildcats and anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, the search for theory led to the call for a Black/Red Conference. It was on January 12, 1969, that the Conference Charles Denby had called together met in Detroit and considered the objective situation inseparable from questions of philosophy and revolution. Charles Denby's welcome stressed: "One of the main purposes of this conference is to have Black people speak out. Everyone will have ten minutes. The author of *Philosophy and Revolution* will have an hour first, but the discussion will continue the entire day."

The analysis of this conference, and the phenomenon of Women's Liberation as a movement, led that year to our Perspectives thesis, "The Needed American Revolution." In tracing the history of the Black dimension and its struggle and idea of freedom, we wrote: "Thus, where the white rulers denuded a continent via the infamous triangular trade in *slaves, rum and molasses*, the Blacks were exchanging ideas—the ideas of freedom, the *experiences* of Black masses in action, and their aspirations for a *new world.*"

II

In the more than a decade and a half since we wrote that 1969 Perspectives thesis, the Black dimension has further expanded and intensified. As a British revolutionary recently wrote us:

What has also happened, burst onto the historic scene, since 1978, is that the triangular trade of ideas and revolts has found a fourth port of entry—actually three ports, Bristol, London, Liverpool. And whereas 100,000 march in an anti-apartheid demonstration in London, calling for divestment, the Black revolt is demanding that those demonstrators not separate their fight against apartheid from the fight against racism at home. At the same moment the Black movement is finding an affinity with Azanian youth who are putting their lives on the line for freedom.

The whirlwind of events which have brought South Africa to the threshold of revolution, during the last year, reveals ever broader segments of society being drawn into the liberation process. Not only have mixed-race and Indian communities clashed with the South African Defense Forces, but reports have shown white students describing the brutal treatment they have suffered at the hands of the police for expressing their solidarity with Black South Africa. Moreover, a multi-racial contingent of student protestors have for the first time attempted to make a direct link to imprisoned African National Congress (ANC) leader, Nelson Mandela, by marching on Pollsmoor Prison.

Ever since the 1960 Sharpeville massacre and the trial and conviction of the Black leaders, headed by Mandela, the revolts have not stopped. The 1960s continue to live for the youth demonstrators. Mandela was the first to signal the end of limiting their freedom fight to non-violence by calling his organization—"Spear of the Nation." The new, massive demonstrations that called for the overthrow of Botha-ism declared: "Free Mandela, the real leader of the people—he is the one who should sit in Botha's chair."

Winnie Mandela's revolutionary leadership and the brutal harassment she is undergoing right now is not just due to the great Nelson Mandela. She has shown a revolutionary spirit which is really the spirit of the whole Black nation. Take the mid-1970s when she was in Pretoria prison, sentenced to solitary confinement. Having undergone five days and nights of intensive mental torture, she was returned to her cell. She was so utterly exhausted that she almost didn't see a small piece of silver foil at the bottom of the sanitary bucket, but she picked it up and unwrapped it to find a message which ended with: "Mother of the nation we are with you." This is not just the story of one woman liberationist, but the irrepressible, volcanic nature of South African Blacks.

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Contrast that to the UN's Reagan-dominated Decade for Women Conference that was convened in Nairobi, Kenya. It is true that even there, at the official conference, the African women's liberationists made their presence felt. A good deal more representative of women, both in the U.S. and around the world, was the non-governmental "Forum '85," which did a good job of exposing the retrogressionism of Reaganism. Not only were 10,000 present at the Forum as against 3,000 at the official meetings, but the spirit and discussion, whether on politics or other issues, were concerned with the actual problems of women.

The greatest events, however, took place neither at the government-sponsored meetings nor at the Forum, but on the lawn where masses of women assembled, some just on hearing that there was such a women's conference taking place.

Elizabeth Wanjara, a Kenyan woman, heard about the Decade for Women Conference on a transistor radio in her hometown of Bungoma, about 450 miles from Nairobi. It inspired eight other women to get together with her, sell honey and knit sweaters to raise enough money to buy her a bus ticket.

The fact that she is illiterate only proves that intelligence is not related to reading and writing, but to experience and your own thinking. It was this woman who said (and she was the only one who said it) that she knew exactly why she came: "I have to go back to all the women in my place and tell them the stories on all the happenings here. I have to tell them how we can be ourselves--no longer just have babies and have babies dying."

What is important about this Conference is that thousands of women, spontaneously and many without any previous experiences at such meetings, all had a passion for freedom and gained strength from knowing that there were others who felt the way they did and that they did not have to solve their problems individually.

Also circulated on the lawn was the petition for others to "Support the South African liberation movements," handed out by Esther Levitan, a South African who has been fighting apartheid for 40 years. It was clear that the women did not agree with the official conference that this was the end of their decade, but considered it to be the beginning of a totally new relationship. This is what we mean in pointing out that all the ramifications of the Conference are first now to be worked out. The very category that we made of the maturity of the women in our age--Woman as Revolutionary Force and Reason--was created to show that women are now ready to be part of the dialectic of thought as well as of revolution.

Presently, the pivotal new development in South Africa is the founding of the half-million strong massive trade union federation COSATU

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(Congress of South African Trade Unions), who elected as President Elijah Barayi, a political activist and leader of the mineworkers union. The powerful 150,000-member National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), headed by their general secretary Cyril Ramaphosa, remains the backbone of the new federation of 33 unions plus the United Democratic Front (UDF). They have all been part of the undeclared civil war.

On December 1, 10,000 workers held a mass rally in Durban to celebrate this largest trade union federation in South African history. They sang, "U COSATU—Sonyuka naye 'masingena enkululekweni (COSATU—We'll rise with you as we advance towards freedom)!" They continued with the theme set at the birth of a new nation, when the new COSATU president, Barayi, issued a warning to the Botha regime to "get rid of the passes and . . . get rid of the troops in the townships before the house burns down." The massive Congress as a whole—men and women, all the 33 different unions, and the UDF—made it enthusiastically clear that their economic struggles could not be held apart from the political struggle for freedom.

III

What is crystal clear in the high intensity of the Black dimension's struggle—whether we are talking of Labor, Women, or Youth—is that the post-World War II world manifests the presence of an unquenchable thirst for freedom. What the emergence of the Third World as a whole world has revealed is just how continuous are those freedom struggles. It is this movement *from practice* that is itself a form of theory which has been challenging revolutionary intellectual-theoreticians to develop a new unity, a new relation, of theory to practice.

As Marxist-Humanists, we developed this category about the movement from practice back in the 1950s, with our analysis of the Absolute Idea* as not only a movement from theory to practice, but a movement as well from practice to theory, while mass movements were erupting the world over. It was seen in the U.S. in production, where the workers were battling Automation. It was seen in East Europe in the new type of revolts from under totalitarian Communism, which erupted first in East Germany in 1953 and came to a climax in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Nor did they stop there, as they spread to the Third World—the Afro-Asian-Latin American worlds—against Western imperialism. Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays were thus brought out from

*Raya Dunayevskaya's Letters on the Absolute Idea, written May 12 and May 20, 1953, are included in the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, pp. 1797-1812.

the dusty Archives onto the historical stage.

The todayness of Marx's Marxism is evident from the moment he founded a new continent of thought and of revolution. Thus, even what then (the 1840s) appeared very minor, his sensitivity to language, was evident in his objection to the capitalist use of the word, "Negro," as synonymous with "slave." This sensitivity was integral to his whole philosophy, which he called a "new Humanism." It characterized his entire revolutionary life. Whether it was his concept of the Man/Woman relationship or the developments he was working on in the last decade of his life on pre-capitalist societies and what we now call the Third World, or whether it was what he wrote about Iroquois women or the communal life form, it is this which led to our considering Marx's last decade a "trail to the 1980s," now that his *Ethnological Notebooks* were finally transcribed and published.

Here is how Raya Dunayevskaya expressed this view of Marx's revolutionary new Humanism with regard to the Black dimension during her Marx Centenary tour in 1983:

Marx's reference in the *Ethnological Notebooks* to the Australian Aborigine as 'the intelligent Black' brought to a conclusion the dialectic he had unchained when he first broke from bourgeois society in the 1840s and objected to the use of the word, 'Negro,' as if it were synonymous with the word, 'slave.' By the 1850s, in the *Grundrisse*, he extended that sensitivity to the whole pre-capitalist world. By the 1860s, the Black dimension became, at one and the same time, not only pivotal to the abolition of slavery and victory of the North in the Civil War, but also to the restructuring of *Capital* itself. In a word, the often-quoted sentence: 'Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the Black skin it is branded,' far from being rhetoric, was the actual reality and the perspective for overcoming that reality. Marx reached, at every historic turning point, for a concluding point, *not* as an end, but as a new jumping-off point, a new beginning, a new vision.

Charles Denby felt that this articulation of Marx's idea was so crucial that he asked that it be included in a new 1983 introduction to our *American Civilization on Trial* that we were publishing to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. It did, in fact, open new doors to us, especially in Black Studies departments. And because we saw in apartheid South Africa a dehumanization of language accompanying its totalitarian rule, we are including as Appendices to this new expanded edition of *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought*, two essays—one on *Negritude* by the Haitian essayist, poet, revolutionary, René Depestre, and one on language by the Kenyan playwright and political critic, Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

The global ramifications of the relationship of theory to practice, of language to class structure, and above all, of conflicting tendencies in the leadership to the masses, makes it all the more imperative to keep

philosophy and revolution inseparable. That this is no academic question has recently (1983) been brought to a shocking counter-revolutionary conclusion, not alone because of the U.S.-imperialist invasion of Grenada, but because what made it easier for American imperialism to finally realize what had been its objective ever since the revolution in 1979 was that the first shot against the leader of the revolution, Maurice Bishop, was fired by his co-leaders, Coard and Austin. Differing tendencies within that revolutionary movement were kept from their international supporters as well as from their own masses. These differences have not been fully faced to this day. Which is why we include in the Appendices the Political-Philosophic Letter on Grenada written by Raya Dunayevskaya at the time of the U.S. invasion.

IV

Toward the end of the 1950s we had completed our major theoretical study, *Marxism and Freedom . . . from 1776 until Today* which is where we declared our goal to be Marxist-Humanism. This work, which was published in 1958, was followed with a booklet entitled *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions*. That was the very period when Frantz Fanon was completing his *Wretched of the Earth* where he declared for a philosophy of revolution that would be inseparable from the actual revolution. He called it "a new humanism."

Even Fidel Castro had insisted, ". . . we are making a humanist revolution, because it humanizes man." That the original refusal to be confined to a choice between two nuclear Behemoths who dominated the world collapsed has not extinguished the passion for totally new human relations with the new revolutionary forces as Reason.

Frantz Fanon had given up his French citizenship to become an Algerian revolutionary. At the same time, he was sharply critical of "the native intellectual (who) has thrown himself greedily upon Western culture . . . Rabelais, Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe . . ."

The same type of critique of intellectuals, and indeed political leaders, was voiced by the great Nigerian revolutionary essayist-poet-novelist Wole Soyinka, who has watched the monolithism that many leaders tried to impose on the revolutionary movement in Africa soon after independence. When asked "What do you think of the view, often expressed in the United States, that Blacks should not criticize other Blacks?" he replied: "My response can only be the same as I make when I am faced with that special pleading in relation to Black leaders who mess up the minds and lives of the Black peoples they govern: Criticism,

like charity, begins at home."

Fanon continued his criticism of the very concept of leader: "'Leader': the word comes from the English verb, 'to lead,' but a frequent French translation is 'to drive.' The driver, the shepherd of the people no longer exists today. The people are no longer a herd; they do not need to be driven." Fanon's conclusion concretized his critique of the "Leader" and his cohorts who formed the dominant party: "The single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous and cynical." (*Wretched of the Earth*, p. 133). This led him to conclude: "The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former value and shapes. . . ." (*Wretched of the Earth*, p. 197).

The year 1983, the Marx Centenary year, was marked by us, as Marxist-Humanists, with a national tour around the publication of a new work, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, that dealt with this whole question of nationalism and internationalism, philosophy and revolution, not only in general or related only to the decade of the 1980s, but related both to the new moments of Marx's last decade, which we had called a trail to our decade, and to the way great revolutionaries confronted historic turning points. It is this book which, in its final chapter, threw down the gauntlet to all post-Marx Marxists, declaring that they had not fully grasped Marx's "new moments."

Marx's view in his last decade, which revolved around the relationship to the West of what we now call the Third World, led him to declare that the revolution could come first in a so-called technologically backward land, ahead of technologically-developed Europe. Marx's deep dive—into pre-capitalist societies; into the fetishism of commodities in capitalist societies; and at the opposite pole into the "new passions and forces" that would aim, with the revolution, to abolish any division between manual and mental labor, in a word to create totally new human relations—had laid a trail for revolutionaries today.

Our age, with its new generation of revolutionaries the world over, is presently witness to the unarmed Black revolutionary masses fighting the savage apartheid totalitarian regime, armed to the teeth. Where the regime doesn't succeed in murdering these freedom fighters—over 1,000 have already been killed in 1985—it herds them into the most dehumanized conditions of its foul prisons. It cannot, however, silence the revolutionary voices that reverberate the world over.

This movement from practice has international support not only for its struggles but for its ideas—ideas that, as we have shown, Steve Biko found had a strong affinity to both Frantz Fanon and American Black thought. As Frantz Fanon put it: "Let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction. . . . This new humanity cannot do otherwise

than define a new humanism both for itself and for others."

Now that we do have both a Third World and a new generation of revolutionaries as Reason in the period in which we finally have Marx's writings of his last decade, and thus can grasp Marx's Marxism—not Engels', not Luxemburg's, not Lenin's but Marx's Marxism as a *totality*—it is up to our age to work out his "new Humanism." Too much of the old clings to the newly independent states. Russia, which achieved in 1917 the greatest proletarian revolution the world has experienced, was transformed into its opposite—a state-capitalist society—in the Stalin decades, as it was surrounded by world capitalism degenerating to Nazism. The concept of new human relations—of not stopping the revolution with the overthrow of the old society, thereby aborting what Marx called "the revolution in permanence"—becomes the task for this generation to spell out anew for our age.

— February 1, 1986



Charles Denby, the worker-editor of *News & Letters* from 1955 to 1983, and Raya Dunayevskaya, founder of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., in the office of *News & Letters*.

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Introduction

by

CHARLES DENBY

Editor, *News & Letters*

and

RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Chairwoman, News & Letters Committees

On this, the 10th anniversary of the 1968 Kerner Commission's admission that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal," it is clear that nothing has been done to change the situation that the 1967 uprisings throughout the breadth and length of the land had forced the President's Commission to acknowledge. Today's papers are filled with statistics proving that conditions of life and labor among Blacks have not only not improved... they have worsened. Whether you take the 204-page report of the Urban League, the three-day spread of the *New York Times*, or the single column into which the *Chicago Tribune*, *Detroit Free Press* and others have squeezed a whole decade's neglect, the following facts glare out:

- Unemployment is twice what it was 10 years ago.
- Poverty has worsened and so has the death rate.
- And while the Black middle class has grown, so has pauperization among the poor—and not just for those on welfare. Many can't even reach that level of poverty. *There are families who, literally, have not been on a job for three generations!*

The New York blackout illuminated the fraud in the long-known statistic that the "average" unemployment among Blacks is twice that of whites. Even the statistic that unemployment among Black youth is fully 30% does not tell the whole story. The naked truth is that there are Black ghettos where unemployment among Black youth is 80%!

What the proliferation of statistics failed to show, however, is that the dissatisfaction with the government and the Blacks' erstwhile leaders—headed by that mouthpiece of U.S. imperialism, the Ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young—does not mean that the Black masses are just despairing. Contrary to the reports in the white press, Black America's *actual rejection* of white capitalistic-imperialistic exploitation, with or without Black lackeys, is at one and the same time, *a time-bomb that is sure to explode, and a time for thinking and readying*

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for action.

Put another way, what seems to be quiescence is not apathy. Rather it is the hewing out of new ways to meet the challenge of the times which would not again allow activity to get so separated from theory (and vice versa), as very nearly to assure aborted revolutions. To succeed, philosophy and revolution must be united. Which is why Black youth are taking a second, deeper look at the writings of a very different type of Ambassador—the Martiniquan Frantz Fanon. Fanon, who had given up his French citizenship to be an actual participant in the Algerian Revolution and theoretician of Third World revolutions, had come as Algeria's Ambassador to Ghana in 1960.

But nearly a decade before then, in that other quiescent period—the early 1950s—Fanon had broken with European values, and, in 1952, wrote that original philosophic work, *Black Skin, White Masks*. It became the transition point to new theory, and practice, of revolution. Fanon was the precursor of a whole new generation of revolutionaries.

By the time, in 1961, when Fanon wrote his masterpiece, *The Wretched of the Earth*, it was to be not just his highest point of development, and not only a Manifesto of the Third World, but a Manifesto with global dimensions he called "a new humanism." That its todayness keeps proving itself in reality as well as in theory was shown both at the height of youth revolt in Paris, May 1968, and all over again during the summer of 1976 when Soweto teenagers, rebelling against being made to learn Afrikaans, the language of the oppressors, were found instead to be reading *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Before his savage murder, Steve Biko, that leader of the Black Consciousness movement who made the link to Fanon most direct both on consciousness and on internationalism, said: "The Black Consciousness movement does not want to accept the dilemma of capitalism versus communism. It will opt for a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of black communalism. . . . As Fanon put it, 'the consciousness of the self is not the closing of a door to communication. . . . National consciousness which is not nationalism is the only thing that will give us an international dimension.'"

It is this, just this, type of affinity of ideas of freedom that led American Black youth to identify with Africa and Caribbean freedom struggles and thinking. Petty-bourgeois intellectuals may not have noticed this working out of a new relationship of theory to practice that is itself a form of theory, since they haven't done the "theorizing." But the American Black identification with Soweto and Biko, with Fanon and Caribbean thought, was precisely that, as Black and white American youth demonstrations against U.S. imperialism's heavy investments in apartheid South Africa showed. Opposition to U.S. imperialism's propping up of Rhodesia while mouthing hollow words regarding

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"Black majority rule," words as false as Ian Smith's, is another such manifestation. Many are the ways the passion for freedom is articulating itself.

It is this idea of liberation whose time has come, which inspired the Black authors of this pamphlet—John Alan and Lou Turner—to probe their own experiences as well as historic-philosophic developments. One—Lou Turner—came into the Movement just when the civil rights struggles of the 1960s had reached, on the one hand, a new point of development with "Hell, no, we won't go!" into the Vietnam war, and, on the other hand, got aborted at the very highest point reached in Kent, Ohio, and Jackson, Mississippi, against U.S. imperialism's invasion of Cambodia.

The other—John Alan—who had been in all class struggles as well as Black struggles from the mid-1940s, felt that the very length of his experiences demanded a total re-examination and re-evaluation of the doings he felt had lacked a comprehensive theory, ever-widening the gulf between revolution and philosophy. He also felt keenly the constant underestimation of Black American thought—as if the Third World struggles were the whole and had no roots in the Black American experience. The truth was that the two-way road from Africa to America and back, indeed the triangular—African, West Indian, Black American—development of ideas which led to actual liberation movements, had started way back when all capitalism saw was a triangular trade of slaves, rum, molasses.

Karl Marx had been the first to graphically and profoundly sum up the beginnings of capitalism:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.¹

And what his new continent of thought—Historical Materialism that he called "a new Humanism"—led Marx to point to as the path of world revolution was the "new forces and new passions" that would not only destroy the old capitalistic society but create the new, classless social order on truly human foundations. Bound by this vision, the authors of *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought* wish to trace the triangular development of ideas and actual achievement of liberation, not for history's sake, but as preparation for the American revolution-to-be.

News & Letters, both as a paper and as organization, is proud to publish their study and to appeal to all revolutionaries to rise to the challenge of the times beset by myriad crises, as well as to open new

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 31, Vol. 1, Kerr edition, p. 823 (Penguin edition, p. 915).

roads of revolution in thought as in fact. When Frantz Fanon declared that the colonial fight for freedom was "not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute," he was, in fact, laying the foundation for the Absolute Idea—the unity of theory and practice—not just as a summing up, a totality of past and present, but what we call new beginnings for the future. Revolutionary Black thought, whether it comes from Azania (South Africa), the Caribbean, or the United States, is not end, but prologue to action. We invite all readers to join our authors in working out the imperative task they set for themselves to prepare theoretically for the American revolution-to-be.

*Detroit, Michigan,
May, 1978*



Mass student rallies, like this one in 1977, were held continuously by Soweto students in opposition to apartheid South African educational policies.

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Part I

Soweto, Black Consciousness and Steve Biko

SOWETO, THE SOUTH AFRICAN ghetto where the Black student revolt erupted in June 1976, reverberated throughout the world like a thunderbolt. It not only signalled a new stage of revolt among youth, including pre-teenagers, but also marked the greatest revolt South Africa had yet seen among workers, nothing short of a three-day General Strike in August 1976. The dehumanized apartheid government's answer to these two thunderbolts—which gave proof to the truth that no matter how oppressive the state, it cannot kill the passion for freedom—was the slaughter of hundreds of unarmed students, capped by the savage murder in September 1977 of Steve Biko, the founder of the Black Consciousness movement. But let us begin at the beginning—Soweto, June 1976.

The Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC) began their revolt by rejecting the attempt of the apartheid government to impose the Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction in their segregated schools. The South African state, through its Bantu educational policy, was, in this instance, heaping an added and offensive burden upon a learning process already made difficult by tuition fees, high cost of books, crowded classrooms, etc.; it was now arrogantly demanding total ideological submission by mandating that Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor, be used in the schools.

To Black South Africans, white South African civilization is an insidious maze of interconnecting laws and regulations, validating total control by white supremacists over every physical and every mental aspect of their lives. The Soweto revolt, in its opposition to the Afrikaans language, literally emerges out of the "Black mind," in defense of its own mind, resisting an absolutism which wants only to see its own image reflected in the minds of the people it is oppressing.

But the students of Soweto had no illusions about the value of the education offered to them by the apartheid state. They had long discarded any lingering belief that an apartheid education would provide

them with the equipment to participate in a common South Africa. "For them, reality had been stripped naked: they can see their future in the horrifying Bantustans of Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and other [homelands]. And the spectre is so horrendous that they do not mind to be shot at."²

After bloody encounters with South African police, using sophisticated modern weapons of warfare to quell students armed only with sticks and stones, a victory was won by the students. Afrikaans was withdrawn as a language to be used in instruction, but it was a costly victory in young lives. Over 600 Black students lay dead, countless others wounded and/or arrested. This was not the end of the struggle, it was only a manifestation of how wide and how deep the opposition to apartheid was among Blacks and the rest of the discriminated against people in South Africa, and at the same time, it was the beginning of a new stage of the South African revolution.

Moreover, it was not only Soweto. Listen to a 16-year-old Cape Town student, Ms. Miriam Gafoor, speaking to a Supreme Court judge: "Apartheid has become an insult to our human dignity. Our whole being rebels against the whole South African existence. The system of apartheid does not allow us to grow to full womanhood or manhood. It is reducing us to intellectual cripples." Refusing to give her evidence before a government commission anonymously, she told her story this way: "I am a student at Saltriver High School, facing charges of public violence and arson. I was suspended from my school with seven other students. I am 16 years old and I have been locked up, refused food, and interrogated... We, the youth of South Africa, reject the subservient heritage that has been handed down to us..."

Scarcely a day in August passed without police shooting down demonstrators somewhere, as township after township exploded. By September 2, 1976, the revolt had spread to the "Coloured" masses (as those of mixed race are identified in South Africa), when 3,000 Coloured youth brought the conflict for the first time directly to a white area itself—downtown Cape Town.

What started as a student protest against the forced use of the oppressor's language, assumed overnight all the features of a movement for national liberation, and in a very short time it became also a movement for the emancipation of labor—for Black workers to have the right to *withhold* their labor, i.e., to strike. The successful three-day General Strike in August 1976 sent shock waves through the economy and the minds of South Africa; the ruling whites learned that their vaunted white civilization was nakedly exposed, disclosing that its very existence was dependent upon Black labor.

² Dr. Manas Buthelezi, "Letter from Soweto," *Africa*, Dec. 1976.

THE EVENTS IN SOWETO revealed a high degree of consciousness and organization, carried out in the most democratic and meticulous manner, with the students as initiators and co-ordinators. Student bodies within the school system were conduits through which forms of action to be taken were relayed to Soweto's population, so student attendance remained at the maximum during revolt. Once the schools became the students' vehicles for discussion and organization of further defiance, the police began to pass out forged leaflets, instructing the children to stay home.

They refused to stay home. The students of Soweto, alone, decided when to boycott and when to attend classes. In 1977, so total was the boycott that shut down all the schools in Soweto, in other Black townships and even in several "tribal homelands," that at the end of the year the government dropped thousands of leaflets over Soweto by plane warning parents their children would fail if they did not show up for examinations. "Are you going to allow dropouts and intimidators to ruin your child's future?" the leaflets asked. A year-and-a-half after the first uprising, the answer was a school boycott more powerful than ever; the number of boycotters was more than 300,000.

Another aspect of the students' creative organizing was the development of the concept of consultation. For example, the SSRC pointed out that the success of the strike in Johannesburg was due in great measure to consultations with taxi drivers and railroad workers, urging them to stop all traffic to that city. The SSRC also realized that the failure to consult could cause a break in the front against apartheid, as in the case of the so-called Zulu backlash. Consultation with the Zulu workers, who lived in the hostels provided for them in Soweto, was all that was necessary for the "backlash" to disappear.

What emerges, in a very concrete way, is that the students, workers, women and children of Soweto, devised, during their rebellion, an organization and a method and a theory of struggle, which was a new extension of the old existing organizations, such as the African National Congress (ANC), the All African Convention (AAC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC).

Ezekiel Mphahlele, the Black South African essayist, novelist and teacher, when he returned in the summer of 1977 after many years abroad, was quick to recognize the great distance between the "old" and the "new" in Soweto. He scolded the political chiefs who claimed that they had engineered the revolts from exile, "on international time and money" when, he said, the truth is: "The students did it all on their own steam, driven by their own hurts and esteem of themselves."³

This is not to say that the revolt in South Africa has not been

³ Ezekiel Mphahlele, "Back to Ancestral Ground," *First World*, May-June 1977.

continuous. When Bantu Education was first introduced in 1953, African students went on strike at almost every institution of higher education throughout South Africa. Although Black workers are forbidden to strike, and refusal to work is punishable by fine and imprisonment, illegal strikes jumped, after they were forbidden, from 33 in 1954 to 73 in 1955. When South Africans were involved in the great bus boycott of 1957, hundreds of thousands walked 20 miles to work and trudged another 20 miles back to their segregated townships for three solid months until they won their fight against a fare increase.

In 1969, the dockworkers won the support of not only African students, but even students at the white universities in Cape Town and the Witwatersrand. The years between 1973 and 1975 saw wave after wave of strikes. *But the half million African workers and almost quarter million Coloured workers, who struck in response to the Soweto students' call in August of 1976, carried out the greatest strike in the history of South Africa.*

The women, especially those in the garment and food canning industries, were numbered among the most militant. The Cape clothing industry, which employs 50,000 workers—90% of them women—was completely shut down in the general strike. And white housewives were seen scrubbing their own floors for the first time in their lives when Black maids failed to report for work.

WOMEN HAVE BEEN FIGHTING to change the system ever since 1913, when their demonstrations against passes in the Orange Free State were so massive and militant that the passes were withdrawn. In 1955, when pass-carrying was once again to be extended to the women, 2,000 of them—mostly Africans, but including women of other races—began protests that continued until August 9, 1956, when 20,000 women converged on Pretoria. *August 9 has since then become known as "Women's Day" in South Africa.*

Even the rural women, who are the largest single group, the most deprived culturally and the most burdened by the migratory labor system that forces their husbands and sons to leave their homeland, marched over 10,000-strong from Natal South Coast to Port Shepstone to present their grievances in 1958.⁴

But Soweto 1976 was both the highest point of integrality with Black Consciousness and the first mass opposition to apartheid to break into world view since the Bloody Sharpeville massacre of 1960, when

⁴ For more on Black women in South Africa, see: Phyllis Ntantala, *An African Tragedy* (Agascha Productions, Detroit, MI, 1976); and Hilda Bernstein, *For Their Triumphs and for Their Tears* (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 104 Newgate Street, London EC1, England, 1975; available in the U.S. from IDAF, P.O. Box 17, Cambridge, MA 02138).



Many of these women were arrested following their protest in 1958 against South Africa's apartheid policy which demands that women carry passes.

thousands of Africans shouted "Izwe Lethu," burned their passes, and marched to the police stations demanding to be arrested for having violated the apartheid rules. The unarmed mass of men, women and children were machine-gunned, a state of emergency was declared, and any political organization daring to challenge white supremacy—such as the ANC and PAC—was outlawed at once. Soweto is the proof that arms not only cannot kill the Idea of freedom, but that the struggle also embraces ever newer layers of the population.

Soweto was not just a simple separation in time from a preceding generation, but such a quantum leap into revolutionary methods and ideas that it inspired a Soweto youth to proclaim: "Go and tell the world that the process of Black Liberation, which nobody can reverse, has begun in South Africa!"⁵ Within hours that spirit caught on in every township in South Africa, from Johannesburg to Cape Town, and soon, on the walls of schools and government buildings, slogans appeared announcing: "Black IS power."

Whether the leadership was killed or exiled or jailed, more leaders emerged from below. An American Black intellectual who spent 11 months in South Africa reported that the youth learned to taunt the

⁵ See "Letter From Soweto" cited above.

"hippos" (the name of the eight-sided, armed police transports used to strike fear in Soweto residents). To divert the "hippos" from actual meetings, students would gather at a different place nearby to throw rocks at "hippos" that came to break up the meeting, then disappear and regroup elsewhere, while the actual meeting continued undisturbed.

Not a week has passed since the first outburst in June 1976 that hasn't disclosed that it is a still ongoing revolution. It is for this reason—precisely this—that the armed apartheid government has deluded itself that it was "reasonable and practical" to throw Steve Biko, naked and unconscious from serious head wounds, into the rear of a police jeep, and drive him 700 miles to murder him. It was then that the world learned in full what the government tried to suppress—Biko's philosophy of liberation, which he called Black Consciousness.

Listen to Steve Biko speak for himself:⁶

By Black consciousness I mean the cultural and political revival of an oppressed people. This must be related to the emancipation of the entire continent of Africa since the Second World War. Africa has experienced the death of white invincibility.

I must emphasize the cultural depth of Black consciousness. The recognition of the death of white invincibility forces Blacks to ask the question: "Who am I?" "Who are we?" And the fundamental answer we give is this: "People are people!" So "Black" consciousness says: "Forget about color!" But the reality we faced 10 to 15 years ago did not allow us to articulate this...

Where is the evidence of support among the younger generation for BPC [Black People's Convention]? In one word: Soweto! The boldness, dedication, sense of purpose, and clarity of analysis of the situation—all of these things are definitely a result of Black consciousness ideas among the young generation in Soweto and elsewhere. Indeed, this is not quantitatively analyzable. For the power of a movement lies in the fact that it can indeed change the habits of people. This change is not the result of force but of dedication, of moral persuasion. This is what has gotten through to the young people. They realize that we are not dealing with mere bread and butter issues...

Ah, this is a quick change! We begin with the assumption that from the international point of view South Africa is a pawn in the politics of pragmatism, in the game of power between the U.S. and USSR...

In order to realize its long-term policy, America has to find a group with which it can be allied... It appears to us that this is the reason why [U.S. President] Carter chose Andrew Young as Ambassador to the UN, and why he sent him to Southern Africa. In this way Carter hopes to develop a new complexion, acceptable to the Third World in general and

⁶ The following excerpt are from "Steve Biko Speaks for Himself," *News & Letters*, November 1977.

to South Africa in particular. Carter uses Andrew Young's color as a special passport to the Third World. But Young has no program except the furtherance of the American system. That's why he plays tennis in Soweto. Carter is doing more skillfully what Nixon and Ford did: to make the American system work more efficiently.

In being so critical of the economic self-interest in the Third World on the part of American capitalism, I at the same time have no illusions about Russia. It is as imperialistic as America. This is evident in its internal history as well as in the role it plays in countries like Angola. But the Russians have a less dirty name; in the eyes of the Third World, they have a clean slate. Because of this, they have had a better start in the power game. Their policy seems to be acceptable to revolutionary groups. . . Here we are probably faced with the greatest problem in the Third World today. We are divided because some of us think that Russian imperialism can be accepted as purely an interim phase while others—like myself—doubt whether Russia is really interested in the liberation of the Black peoples.

The Black consciousness movement does not want to accept the dilemma of capitalism versus communism. It will opt for a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of Black communalism. In the present stage of our struggle it is not easy to present details of this alternative. But it is a recognition of the fact that a change in the color of the occupier does not necessarily change the system. In our search for a just system we know that the debate about economic policy cannot be pure, completely separate from existing systems. In our writings we at times speak of collective enterprises because we reject the individualistic and capitalistic type of enterprises. But we are not taking over the Russian models. . .

The call for Black consciousness is the most positive call to come from any group in the Black world for a long time. It is more than just a reactionary rejection of Whites by Blacks. The quintessence of it is the realization by the Blacks that, in order to feature well in this game of power politics, they have to use the concept of group power and to build a strong foundation for this. Being an historically, politically, socially and economically disinherited and dispossessed group, they have the strongest foundation from which to operate. The philosophy of Black consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by the Blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self.

At the heart of this kind of thinking is the realization by the Blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Once the latter has been so effectively manipulated and controlled by the oppressor as to make the oppressed believe that he is a liability to the White man, then there will be nothing the oppressed can do that will really scare the powerful masters. Hence thinking along lines of Black consciousness makes the Black man see himself as a being, entire in himself, and not as an extension of a broom or additional leverage to some machine.

It is often claimed that the advocates of Black consciousness are hemming themselves into a closed world, choosing to weep on each

other's shoulders and thereby cutting out useful dialogue with the rest of the world. Yet I feel that the Black people of the world, in choosing to reject the legacy of colonialism and white domination and to build around themselves their own values, standards and outlook to life, have at last established a solid base for meaningful cooperation amongst themselves in the larger battle of the Third World against the rich nations.

As Fanon puts it, "the consciousness of the self is not the closing of a door to communication... National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension..."

We have in us the will to live through these trying times; over the years we have attained moral superiority over the white man; we shall watch as Time destroys his paper castles and know that all these little pranks were but frantic attempts of frightened little people to convince each other that they can control the minds and bodies of indigenous peoples of Africa indefinitely.

WHAT IS POWERFUL AND NEW about Biko's ideas is that he always centers the possibility for change *within the subject of the oppressed*, and not simply within the South African economy or in the hierarchy of the system. This distinguishes him sharply from people like Andrew Young and opinion-manufacturers in this country who deliberately delude the people that racial persecution in South Africa can be ended by applying a tourniquet to the economy, which in any case is always applied in a half-hearted manner, like the wrist-slapping six-month arms embargo by the UN (which does not include nuclear materials).

The ominous character of Henry Kissinger's role in South Africa, perpetuated now by Andrew Young at the very moment of the coalescence of revolutionary forces in South Africa, shows the imperialist face of the U.S. This is seen not only in the U.S.'s heavy investments in South Africa, but in its global political counter-revolutionary role throughout the whole of Africa ever since the birth of the Third World.

When the African Revolutions first unfolded in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they electrified the world not only because in a single decade they reshaped the map of Africa, but also because the banner of liberation raised was charged with a dynamism of ideas, contrasting sharply with the most famous monopoly of all—the U.S.'s underdeveloped intellectuals who were then expounding "the end of ideology."⁷

⁷ See Raya Dunayevskaya, "The New Humanism: African Socialism," Appendix to *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions* (The Left Group, Cambridge University Labour Club, 1961; new expanded edition published by News and Letters, 1984), reprinted as Appendix to "Henry Kissinger's African Safari: Pressuring Rhodesia While Bolstering Apartheid South Africa" in *The Political-Philosophic Letters of Raya Dunayevskaya* (News and Letters, Detroit, 1977).



Coffin of murdered Steve Biko is carried by angry South Africans.

The tragic death of Steve Biko brought forth the re-discovery of self-consciousness as an objective force within the process of liberation. Black Consciousness means that Black people in Azania must be for themselves "and not as an extension of a boom or an additional leverage to some machine."

Every white person's health and prosperity in South Africa is derived wholly from the dirt-cheap Black labor held in control by restrictive laws and police terror. South Africa's prosperity during the 1960s and 1970s rested largely upon the world price of gold. Even with the inflated price of gold, its economy would not have boomed if it were not for the low wages that were paid to Black workers in the labor-intensive mining operations.

The UN reports that real wages in South Africa have not increased since 1910. Black unions are recognized neither by the industries nor by law, and Black workers earn as little as \$40 a month in many industries. That is why 50 of the largest 100 U.S. companies operate in South Africa, investing more than \$1.5 billion and realizing a rate of profit that is among the highest in the world.*

Because the "success" of capitalism in South Africa is inseparable from the subsistence wages paid to Black labor, there can be no meaningful improvement for Black workers under such a system. The fear that haunts capitalism in South Africa is the continuous revolt of the masses.

As far back as 1951, one of the leaders and theoreticians in South

* For a discussion of the expanding American investments in South Africa in the context of the current world economic crisis, see Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis* (News and Letters, Detroit, 1978), pp. 12-13.



I.B. Tabata



Robert Sobukwe

Africa, I.B. Tabata, said in his opening address to the first conference of the Society of Young Africa (SOYA):

SOYA can, for instance, assist in bringing to the consciousness of wider sections of the people the two-fold nature of oppression: national oppression and class exploitation . . . You will have noted that I lay great stress on the importance of ideas . . . The ideas are the weapons with which you cut your path in the barbaric jungle of South African society today. *We have to fight ideas with ideas.* We have nothing to lose. We have a world to conquer . . . We go into the struggle, not simply to save the youth, not only to save the non-Europeans. It is a question of the preservation of all society. Our struggle, here in South Africa, is part and parcel of the struggle of humanity as a whole.⁹

The 60s began with massive protests launched by the newly created Pan-African Congress against the pass system. The apartheid government's response was the Sharpeville massacre. PAC leader Robert Sobukwe, charged with incitement, said, "We regard it as our historic role to contribute towards a United States of Africa from Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar." At the end of his four years at hard labor, so determined was the government not to allow him to go free that it rushed through a special law that became known as the "Sobukwe Bill," and sent him to infamous Robben Island as a special prisoner.¹⁰

⁹ Tabata's "Opening Address" to the first conference of the Society of Young Africa, Dec. 20, 1951, is reprinted as Document 98 in Vol. II of the four-volume study *From Protest to Challenge: a Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, edited by Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter (Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, CA, 1972).

¹⁰ Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe died in South Africa on February 26, 1978. See "In Memoriam" by Phyllis Jordan, *News & Letters*, April 1978.

WHEN SOWETO ERUPTED it was again their fear of genuine revolution that impelled the South African government first to step up attempts to fragment the Black people along "tribal" lines with their so-called "homeland" schemes; then to offer minimal reforms to the "Coloured" and Asian population; and, above all, to wage a full scale attack on the identifiable leadership of the organized forms of resistance. Steve Biko was one of hundreds of Black activists, students and trade union leaders who was banned or jailed. Indeed, he had already been banned to the isolation of King Williamstown since 1973, but on August 18, 1977, he was picked up under the infamous Section 6 of the Terrorism Act, which allows permanent detention without charge or trial. On September 12, he was murdered in Pretoria's central prison by the security police, the 23rd activist to die in police custody in 18 months.

South Africa is a society where revolt walks always in the shadow of a massacre. Change and revolution have become, finally, inseparable. The policy of apartheid has made it impossible to think in terms of "degrees" of freedom, because it can only be understood as a little less bondage than the bondage that exists.

What was new about Soweto, in addition to the massive nature of the revolt of the youth as well as the workers, was the internationalization of the struggle, especially its impact on the U.S.



Undaunted by driving downpour, Martin Luther King, Jr. and marchers sing out on historic march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965.

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Part II

Black Struggles in the United States

“THE PRESIDENT OF THIS UNIVERSITY, Dr. Brage Golding, sits on the Board of Directors of the Armco Steel Corporation, and Mr. George Janik, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Kent State University, is an employee of IBM, Inc.,” wrote the undergraduate student representatives at Kent State University, demanding that Golding and Janik resign their positions in these U.S. corporations which support apartheid South Africa with extensive investments. **“The economic future of South Africa can be said to be the willingness of U.S. corporations to invest heavily in a country that offers cheap labor; exploiting the African population at the expense of their dignity, living conditions and rights to a decent living.”**

The anti-apartheid messages were brought home on campus after campus, and not separated from struggles at home. Thus, students at Stanford and the University of California, who initiated mass anti-apartheid actions in 1977, deepened that movement by drawing in demands that the universities restore gutted minority studies and that the courts overturn the Bakke decision. In 1978 demonstrators from many campuses converged on Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, protesting South Africa's participation in the Davis Cup tennis matches. The next month both Wesleyan and Princeton students seized buildings on their campuses until they won the promise from the university administrators to disinvest in banks and corporations dealing with South Africa. The protests, bringing anti-apartheid action home, soon erupted on campuses all over the land. In a three-week span, demonstrations took place at Amherst, Brandeis, Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, MIT, Tufts, Williams, Yale and the University of Michigan.

It is clear that American youth have no more use for a system that degrades humanity than do the youth of Soweto. This rejection of a racist, exploitative, capitalist society permeates university and ghetto youth alike.

So simple a matter as an accidental power blackout in New York City, July 13, 1977, dramatically exposed the Achilles heel of American capitalism, its racism. All over the city the lights, burglar alarms and

electronic locks went out, and within seconds, thousands of Black and Latino youth were racing through all the major ghettos, including Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick in Brooklyn, the South Bronx, Jamaica and Harlem—as well as more “downtown” areas such as Times Square and the Upper West Side.

The youths, followed by the entire community, made the streets and the racist rip-off businesses their own. They dubbed it “Christmas in July” as they smashed into the stores and took what they needed.

All kinds of stores were hit in spontaneous, yet in many cases, highly organized fashion. Sometimes tow trucks were used to pull down burglar gates, and there were often lines, just like at a sale.

The “commandeering” of the private property cannot be compared with the politicalization that was very much in evidence during the urban revolts of the 1960s, but the reasons for the looting and burning in New York City’s ghettos were the same reasons that compelled the ghetto youth of 1964-67 to go out into the streets in rage.

In the case of unemployment, conditions are worse than they were ten years ago. Unemployment among Black youth in 1965 was 20%. Today it is between 40% and 50%. In New York City in 1977 it was 80%. The second highest unemployment category is Black women. And these same two groups also have the highest suicide rates. Whether it is infant mortality in this supposedly highly advanced land, or the alarming suicide rate, or the incredibly high homicide rate for young Black men, it is abundantly clear that life—especially Black life—is “expendable” to American capitalism.¹¹

When Black youth broke into stores and carted off the wares to their ghetto homes, it was as though entire pages of statistics had come alive to challenge the failure of the system to meet the human needs for a whole segment of American society.

HOW TO OVERCOME this failure has baffled all capitalist policy makers and politicians, because they dare not look at the fact that capitalist society really has no “normal” need for the labor of Black youth: Black youth are to be wasted in the ever-maddening cycle of unemployment, welfare, prison, and back again. Solutions offered are minimal, with a lot of pieties about the “work ethic” and “a good minimum education.”

¹¹ The New York Times, April 4, 1978, documents from Health Department records that the death rate in Harlem is almost 50% higher than the New York citywide rate of 10.2 per 1,000 population; the infant mortality rate in Central Harlem is 42.8 per 1,000 live births, against the citywide average of 19 infant deaths for each 1,000 live births. “The gap between Harlem’s rates and rates of other parts of New York have been widening over the last decade,” the article continues, “despite the introduction in 1966 of Medicaid and Medicare . . .”



Protesters march in front of South African consulate in Chicago during weekly demonstrations. (Picture courtesy of Chicago Defender.)

The realistically-minded Black job seekers know it to be a "con and a shuffle." They know that the few jobs which will be presented are "make work," to which they will not be allowed to bring any creativity or responsibility. As one youth put it, complaining that he had been promised an interesting job and was instead asked to sweep the streets, "When we're grown up, we'll have to take this kind of menial job to have work, but while we're young we want to do something more exciting."

Some so-called radicals and moral defenders of capitalism have characterized the New York "looting" either as a "failure of cultural values" or as "an innate lack of moral standards." Such views express total ignorance of what it is to live in a ghetto; what it means to be young and Black, growing up in the big cities of this country. Although there has been "great advancement" of the Black middle class in the last two decades, and the disappearance of the most visible and obnoxious forms of racism in public accommodations, economic and cultural racism is still part of the day-to-day life in this country.

The New York blackout exposed not only the racism of American capitalism, which has meant a full decade of Depression economic conditions for Blacks, and the attempt to push back every gain made by the Civil Rights movement of the '60s—from jobs, to housing, to numbers imprisoned. It also exposed the widening division between leadership and masses in the Black movement. Contrast the difference

between the way in which Martin Luther King, Jr., trying to respond to the need to unite Black and labor, marched with the sanitation workers on the eve of his assassination in 1968, and the disgusting way in which Maynard Jackson, Black Mayor of Atlanta, broke the sanitation workers' strike in his city in April 1977—on the very anniversary of Dr. King's murder.

Indeed, it was only *after* the New York outburst that Vernon Jordan of the Urban League signalled the end of his and other Black leaders' honeymoon with the Carter Administration by ever-so-mildly taking issue with Carter's lack of specific proposals dealing with Black poverty, most specifically in the area of jobs. The blackout events had exposed the fakery of Carter's rhetoric and the impotency of Black leadership in this period when most of the gains, so hard-won in the past decade, were being rolled back.

In fact, the Black movement has been in a situation of "dual alienation"—from its own leadership as well as from the American system—ever since the mid-1960s when the mass of Black people began to question the goals and methods of the Civil Rights movement leadership.

WHAT MARKED THE GREAT and historic decade of the '60s was the mass nature of the Black revolt—its self-activity, self-organization and self-development. The courage of the Black youth in the Deep South initiated a new era in the U.S.A. that swept along young and old, gave a new definition to the labor movement's "sit-down" with sit-ins, teach-ins and wade-ins, and inspired a whole new generation of revolutionaries, Black and white.

It was this very mass character and strength out of which the disillusion began, and not only in the South, but in the North as well. The Rent Strike movement which swept the New York slums in the winter of 1963-64 involved over 100,000 people under the slogan "no rent for rats." Yet the leadership led the mass demonstrations into the arena of the landlord-tenant courts, where things bogged down interminably. Six months later, CORE demonstrations were taken over by Harlem youth and the 1964 Harlem rebellion was on; the next summer Black fury exploded in the first of many outbursts in the now internationally-known Watts community in California.

Job discrimination was rampant in industry, and low-paid menial work was the exclusive province of Black and other minority workers. Housing was rigidly segregated, but the Black worker and the urban poor could not afford to live outside of the vast deteriorating slums that were the "Black communities."

The feeling of frustration was not only directed against the system of capitalism and its symbols, i.e. the white landlords and white merchants, but also against the middle-class leadership of the Civil

Rights movement. This leadership was proving to be incapable of moving against the all-pervasive racism that plagued the lives of Black workers and the Black poor city dwellers.

Alongside this criticism of capitalism and of the Black leadership, there was a growing new "Black consciousness." The slogan "Black Power," raised by Stokely Carmichael on the 1965 march from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi with James Meredith and Dr. M.L. King, was the articulation of this growing new Black consciousness.

The slogan "Black Power" did not precede, but *followed* Watts; the Black masses had already broken with the leadership's conception of the movement a full year before Carmichael tried to capsule it as a slogan. As Raya Dunayevskaya put it: "...he signalled more than the end of Dr. King's predominance in the leadership of the Movement. It was also the beginning of the division between ranks and all leaders, himself included."¹² The division was especially sharp between the Black women and Carmichael when he dared to say that the only position for women in the movement was "prone." He never repeated it.

Black power, before it was corrupted with the ideas of "Black Capitalism," reflected the disillusionment with, and alienation from, white capitalism on the one hand, and on the other hand, a feeling of race pride and race respect, wedded to the conscious knowledge that power existed within the Black masses to transform society. It was a quest for a total solution in ideas as well as in action.

Behind the twin slogans of "Black Power" and "Black is Beautiful," the course of Black liberation was altered and the method of struggle redefined. From 1966 onward into the 1970s, no facet of Black American life was left untouched by the Black Power movement.

Into this ferment of so much activity which seemed to spring out of nowhere came the Black urban revolts culminating in the 1967 summer Detroit Revolt. This revolt stunned a nation which had already experienced the "hot summers" of Watts and Newark, but Detroit was to be different. It was not simply an upheaval to "get whitey," but a revolt against the class system wearing a white face. The Black people of Detroit, mainly workers and urban poor, in the fury of their attack upon the symbols of capitalism, did not spare the property of the Black businessman or the Black landlord. The looting of stores, and the sniping at the police and the military, was interracial.

Detroit's outbreak was to be the final step in the new stage of Black revolt—a stage characterized by the movement away from White/Black liberalism to class/race consciousness. It was also at this point of the Black rebellion that the Federal Government decided to intervene with

¹² Raya Dunayevskaya, "New Passions and New Forces," Chapter 9 of *Philosophy and Revolution* (Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1973; new expanded edition, Humanities, New Jersey, 1982), p. 269.

massive sums of money to oil the waters of dissension in the Black ghettos. This spending of federal funds has mainly resulted, over the last decade, in bringing forth "influential" strata of the Black middle class, most of whom are "expert" on handling the "Black Question" within the framework of democratic liberalism espoused by the Democratic Party.

The infusion of federal funds, whether actually under the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) budget or not, was called the "poverty program" by ghetto residents. A name went with it for those Civil Rights leaders who took the jobs that were offered—"poverty pimps." Where the cry of the ghetto revolts was "Abolish the slums!" the intent of the OEO was to create a new generation of "tame" Black leaders.

THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT not only touched every facet of life, it also produced a new consciousness and spirit of revolt that cannot be erased from history.

By the '70s Black workers had organized Black caucuses within their unions to combat the racism found both in the unions and in the factories.

As one of the most experienced Black workers wrote:

An entirely new stage was born with the appearance of groups like DRUM (Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement) within the auto shops. DRUM was organized after Chrysler fired seven of the black workers who had struck the Dodge Main plant to protest a speed-up on the line, while the UAW Convention was being held in Atlantic City. In July, 1968, when DRUM called for a strike to support a list of demands against racism, both by Chrysler and the UAW, the call brought thousands of workers out of the plant and shut down production for two days.

Several months before the Dodge strike in Detroit, 500 workers at the Mahwah, New Jersey Ford plant had shut down production for three days after a racist foreman called a production worker a "black bastard." Out of that spontaneous wildcat, the United Black Brothers of Mahwah Ford was organized.

The greatest difference between the new caucuses emerging today and those that appeared before is that most of us who were in Black opposition groups up to now thought that the most important thing to do was to throw out the leadership, or change the union structure, or something of that nature. The young people today aren't thinking that way. They are thinking in terms of a complete change—of revolution.

Young Blacks today aren't joking about the complete change they are out to get. When the group at Dodge named themselves the Revolutionary Union Movement, it was very significant. Years ago if workers called themselves "revolutionaries," other workers would have shied away from them. Today the very word can attract workers.¹⁴

¹⁴ Charles Denby, "Black Caucuses in the Unions," *New Politics*, Summer 1968; reprinted as Appendix to third edition of *American Civilization on Trial* (News and Letters, Detroit, 1970, 1983).

In the '70s, Black students are letting it be known they have no intention of giving up the Black Studies courses for which they had fought so hard following the assassination of Rev. King. To win these programs Black students had occupied buildings and shut down universities, and two had been shot to death at UCLA over the direction of a new center. In Atlanta, Georgia, high school students boycotted classes and called for daily Black Studies programs in the public school curriculum, beginning with elementary school. One student commented, "If they teach us every day about the White man, they can teach us every day about the Black man."

Suddenly, not only did the number of programs decline sharply from the estimated high of about 500 in 1972, but those remaining were rapidly becoming establishment-controlled. "College administrators don't want meaningful Black studies programs because they would reveal the racist nature of American higher education," charged Leonard Jeffries, director of the Black Studies Department at City College of New York.¹⁴ Nothing better proves his point than the racism revealed by the top intellectual citadel, Harvard, where the Chairman of the Afro-American Studies Department, Prof. Ewart Guinier, fought so long and so hard to prevent the proposed W.E.B. Du Bois Institute from being wrenched from Black control to become an instrument in the hands of the Administration.¹⁵ He lost the battle. "The treatment Blacks receive at Harvard today parallels their treatment in American life. . . is no more elevated than that of the conservative majority of the U.S. Supreme Court. . . or the local police force," said Dr. Guinier, accusing Harvard of nothing less than the "academic lynching of Black students."

This attempt to either eradicate or discipline Black Studies has been met with new student strikes and occupations from the University of Michigan to Brown University in Rhode Island, and from CUNY to Kent State, Ohio. It is not only the existence of serious Black Studies programs that is in jeopardy, but the very presence of substantial numbers of minorities on university campuses. In the South, all-Black colleges have suffered drastic cuts in financial aid. In New York, the open admissions and free tuition policies which gave the opportunity for Black, Latino and poor white youth to go to college have been eliminated.

HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE—which is overwhelmingly Hispanic, offers the only bilingual education program in the East, and was founded in 1970 only after massive pressure from the Latino community of the South Bronx—was threatened with closing in 1976. It was saved only by the immediate occupation of the college

¹⁴ Quoted in "Black Studies Mark Gains but Seek Wider Role" by Edward Fiske, *New York Times*, June 19, 1977.

¹⁵ See "The DuBois Legacy Under Attack" by David Graham DuBois, *The Black Scholar*, Jan-Feb. 1978.

for two weeks by students who conducted classes and seminars themselves.

When the threat was repeated in 1978, students took over an almost finished but empty building across the street from the college at 500 Grand Concourse Ave., which students had demanded become part of their school for four years. It soon could not accommodate all the professors who wanted to teach their classes there to show support for the action.

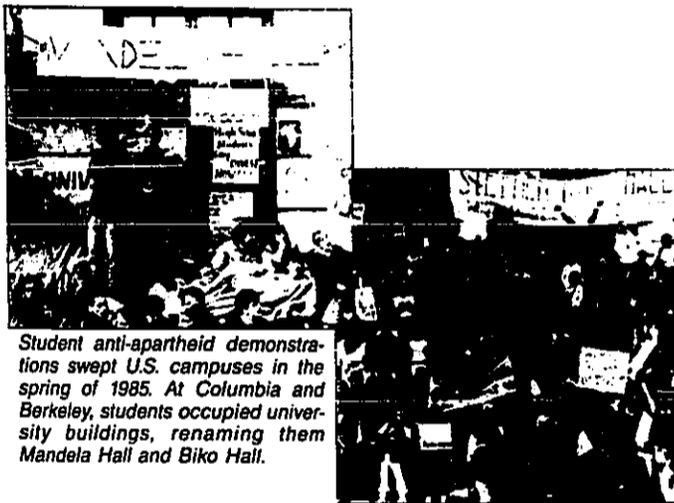
Declaring that "Hostos is affirmative action," the students sent a large contingent to the mass April 1978 march in Washington, D.C. called to protest the Bakke decision which aimed at ending the few meaningful affirmative action programs that ever were implemented, not alone on the campus, but in employment as well.

The protests against Bakke have brought together, in a new way, Black and white students, women, and other minorities on a scale not seen for many years. At the same time, Black students at Cornell University were joined for the first time by white students to protest more cuts in Black Studies there—and Barnard College had a demonstration against the elimination of some of their Black Studies.

In the same way, Kent State students—in their 1977 battle against construction of a gym on Blanket Hill, where the National Guard murdered four students on May 4, 1970—tried not to let their movement be separated this time from the Black dimension, as it was in 1970. Whereas the massacre at Kent State had shut down no less than 426 campuses in 1970, while ten days later none protested the killings at Black Jackson State in Mississippi, the protesters of 1977 were wearing bright red T-shirts with white letters: "Long Live the Spirit of Kent and Jackson State."

BLACK MASSES HAVE ALWAYS been the revolutionary vanguard, releasing an avalanche of creative energy. It was Black workers forming caucuses who took the lead in fighting for decent working conditions for all workers. It was Black youth from preteens through college who inspired white youth to join in protest. All stereotypes of "age" have been broken down in the very process of revolt. One who had been a civil rights activist in the South put it this way: "I was constantly astonished at how youth in 6th, 7th and 8th grade would not only demonstrate and get arrested, but organize others—adults as well as kids. You saw kids as thinkers in the Freedom Schools. This is what we are witnessing again in Soweto, today."

The "new passions and new forces" which Marx first mentioned in his monumental work, *Capital*, are being concretized by our own age because they are central to the transformation of reality—the reality of racism, sexism and capitalist exploitation today.



Student anti-apartheid demonstrations swept U.S. campuses in the spring of 1985. At Columbia and Berkeley, students occupied university buildings, renaming them Mandela Hall and Biko Hall.

Thus, not a single struggle in the '60s or '70s took place without Black women in the forefront. It was Rosa Parks, a Black seamstress, who sparked the whole Black revolt in the South in 1955 by refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. It was Fannie Lou Hamer who initiated Mississippi Freedom Summer. It was Black women, calling themselves "Woman Power Unlimited," who organized help for jailed Freedom Riders in 1961-62. It was Black nurses' aides who led thousands into the streets in Charleston, South Carolina, and Black welfare mothers who organized the Welfare Rights Organization. Black women led the 1966 Maryland Freedom Union movement, organized the strikes of food-processing workers and created the unions for domestic workers.

It is a dimension that crosses generations back to U.S. abolitionists Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, and crosses oceans to women like South African Winnie Mandela, who has been under banning orders in her Soweto home for all but nine months of the past 16 years—ever since her husband, ANC leader Nelson Mandela, was sentenced to Robben Island for life after the infamous Rivonia Trial. She once showed her defiance by coming into court dressed in the green, gold and black colors of the banned ANC. Now she has been banned to Brandfort, a remote Orange Free State village, under severe restrictions that do not allow her in the presence of more than one other person at a time, and

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Rosa Parks was a catalyst for the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement in 1955 when she refused to move to the back of a bus in Montgomery, Ala. In 1985 she marches at the South African Embassy.

After 25 years, Winnie Mandela broke her banning order and spoke at a mass funeral and rally for the victims of the massacre at Mamelodi, outside of Pretoria, on Dec. 3, 1985.



then only by special permission. At the close of her latest trial, the Black audience joined her in giving the clenched-fist Black power salute.¹⁶

Indeed, it was because women are so vital and integral a dimension of the movement to freedom that one young, Black working woman—who fully appreciated the phenomenal impact that Alex Haley's *Roots* had upon white and Black America alike—was led to write, nevertheless:

Never before has the history of Black America had so much notice. For the first time, somebody has traced our history through six generations. . . Nobody reading this book could miss seeing that Kunta Kinte's African culture was so much richer, more human, more *civilized*, than the white slave society into which he was sold. Through his eyes, you can see the real continuity between Africa and America, in the actions and thoughts of people the white man considered savages.

But as I finished the book, there were still some questions that I wondered about. Why does Haley present Africa as a paradise, without taking up any conflicts between Africans themselves? I would like to know who helped the white man capture so many Africans as slaves. We must have had divisions in our people even then.

¹⁶ See *A Window on Soweto* by Joyce Sikakane (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1977) pp. 59-70, for Sikakane's personal account of her own 1969-70 detention and trial along with 21 other women and men, including Winnie Mandela.

I also could not help noticing how it is always the man, and only the man, who really fights for our freedom in the book. Women are always in the background, or compromising with the slave owners. They are shown as though they were not allowed to make any decisions, or to discuss any important issue, even in the section that takes place in Africa. This is not the true history of our people as I know it.

Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman are not even mentioned, and neither are any of the other Black women who fought slavery. If people like Alex Haley write about our history, but let that old stuff about their attitude to Black women get in the way, we will not only never really know our past, but our future. Sometimes he is telling his own ideas of how things should be, instead of the true history of how we were.

A lot of people are saying that *Roots* shows that there is a new stage of Black consciousness. But that stage can't stop with just tracing our ancestry, or the surface consciousness of culture, if that culture means that we put down women, or pretend that there are no divisions among us.¹⁷

This consciousness of race and class and sex, of national and international, of activities for freedom and the idea of freedom, has time and again over the past two decades characterized the most revolutionary aspects of the Black mass movement. It has time and again pushed the Black revolt forward. When one or another Black leader caught this passion and creativity from below, they have been able to make the tremendous leap that the movement itself made. When they have not, the division between masses and leaders who fall to the side or impede the movement has been sharp. Today there is such a deep schism within the African-American world that it will have profound influence on the future development of any movement for real Black liberation in this country. It is a schism that has been with us since the urban revolts, when the Black masses of workers and the poor of the ghettos took into their own hands and minds the action of self-liberation, and thus moved beyond the safe limits set by the middle-class Blacks aspiring to leadership.

We are poised on the brink of new departures in the Black liberation movement. American capitalist-imperialism has been unable to point to any positive direction in these past ten years. To the Black masses this is clear, even if to many of the Black middle class leadership it is not. The new departure involves as much Black revolutionary thought as it does Black revolutionary activity. Indeed the two are inseparable.

The Martiniquan, Frantz Fanon, was the world revolutionary who developed this unity of theory and activity most profoundly, and it is to him we turn in the context of African, Caribbean and American Black thought.

¹⁷ Tommie Hope, "Roots: Africa and America in making the history of freedom," *News & Letters*, Jan-Feb., 1977.



Frantz Fanon

Part III

Frantz Fanon, World Revolutionary

IT IS NOT ACCIDENTAL that Fanon's thoughts are relevant to the liberation struggles in South Africa, as manifested in the Black Consciousness movement. It was Fanon who had, in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, both deepened the Hegelian concept of self-consciousness and in his sharp *critique* of "reciprocity," denied that there is any reciprocity when the relationship of Master and Slave has the additive of color. Quite the contrary. He made that the foundation of revolutionary action. In the dialectical relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, the oppressed gains the idea of his or her own being—one's own self-consciousness—and the desire of being for self, and not for "other"

Fanon's philosophy of revolution has assumed the quality of actuality in the brutal life-and-death struggle between the Black masses of South Africa and the arrogant white ruling class that would, if they could, reduce Black humanity to a thing—an object among other objects.

It is not alone that banned copies of *The Wretched of the Earth* circulate among the South African youth of Soweto, nor that American intellectuals have chosen for their own reasons to present a truncated version of his thought, that makes us return to Frantz Fanon. Rather, it has been a resurgence of the African revolutionary spirit since the defeat of both Portuguese and U.S. imperialism in Angola—a spirit evident in the new wave of guerrilla wars of liberation in Zimbabwe and in Namibia—as well as the mass revolt in South Africa itself, that demands a new look, with the eyes of the late 1970s, at that world revolutionary figure, Frantz Fanon. A "new" understanding of Fanon becomes an imperative at this time, not as past history, but as living activity.

The Black Consciousness movement in South Africa which Steve Biko headed was powerful because it had re-established self-consciousness as a *force* of revolution. The idea that the Black masses have the power to shake South Africa to its foundations has become the reality of South Africa.

In this early work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon had grasped that colonial domination of Third World peoples meant not only economic domination, but also the destruction of the spirit and the personality of the oppressed people. In the chapter on "The Negro and Hegel" in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon is at his exciting best. What appears at first glance as a summation of the "Lordship and Bondage" section of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, is a brilliant exposition of the dialectical inter-relationship of the independence and dependence of self-consciousness to the Black situation in a racist society.

Here Fanon stresses the phenomenon that the self-consciousness of Blacks has been sublated by oppression and that the other, white oppressors, do not regard Black self-consciousness as real, but see in Black only their own self-consciousness. As long as Black self-consciousness is not recognized by the other, "the other will remain the theme of his [Black] actions." If there is no reciprocity between the real self-consciousness of Blacks and the other, the circuit is closed and ultimately Blacks are deprived of being for themselves.

The recognition that Blacks are saddled with a false consciousness of self—or rather two consciousnesses of self—is not new. In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk* that the American world "yields him [Blacks] no true self-consciousness, but lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world:"

Black people, in negating their living for the other, do not simply substitute white self-consciousness with their own—that is, simply take the place of the master—but move from one way of life to another, instead of one life to another. This was crucial for Fanon, because the role of the Black and colonial revolutions is not a perpetuation of the old in "Blackface," but says, "No to the exploitation of man. No to the butchery of what is most human in man: *freedom*."¹⁸

The perils of domination are two-fold, striking with equal ferocity at both the body and the mind of the persecuted and the oppressed. The fact that Fanon understood this, both subjectively as a Black colonial from Martinique, and philosophically through his mastery of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*—especially the section on "Lordship and Bondage"—was to lay the foundation for a theory of revolution.

Because Fanon did not state, in so many words, "I reject bourgeois

¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press, Evergreen Black Cat Edition, New York, 1968), p. 222.

society," and because the language is existentialist, *Black Skin, White Masks* was treated as if Fanon were a "pupil" of Sartre. This was so, not only at the time of its publication, 1952, but even as late as his last work of genius, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961. In truth, a sharp critique of Sartre was included right in *Black Skin, White Masks*, in the section on "Orphée Noir," the very preface Sartre had written to introduce the writings of the *Negritude* school, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*.

In quoting Sartre's analysis of class as the "universal and abstract" and race as the "concrete and particular," which led Sartre to the conclusion that "*negritude* appears as the minor term of a dialectical progression," Fanon writes: "*Orphée Noir* is a date in the intellectualization of the experience of being black. And Sartre's mistake was not only to seek the source of the source but in a certain sense to block that source. . . he was reminding me that my blackness was only a minor term. In all truth, in all truth I tell you, my shoulders slipped out of the framework of the world, my feet could no longer feel the touch of the ground" (pp. 134, 138).

Nor did Fanon, in that work which was a turning point in his revolutionary self-development, disregard the class struggle and the works of Marx. He chose as the frontispiece to "By Way of Conclusion," the very last chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, a quote from Karl Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

The social revolution . . . cannot draw its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning the past. Earlier revolutions relied on memories out of world history in order to drug themselves against their own content. In order to find their own content, the revolutions of the nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead. Before, the expression exceeded the content; now, the content exceeds the expression.

THE REVOLUTIONARY HUMANIST spirit that pervades the whole of the book is seen in Marx's sentence that had the greatest impact on Fanon: "In order to find their own content, the revolutions of the nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead." The expression "let the dead bury the dead" was Hegel's articulation of the passing of one epoch and the coming into existence of another. For Fanon and for us today, that new world was the wretched of the earth—the Third World. The transition to Fanon's work by the same name (which, after all, is the very first sentence of "The International") took another nine years and signalled Fanon's giving up his French citizenship and his professional post at the Blida-Joinville Hospital for Algerian citizenship and revolutionary action.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Fanon's moving letter of resignation from the Blida-Joinville Hospital, "Letter to the Resident Minister," reprinted in the posthumous collection of his political essays, letters.

The Wretched of the Earth was to re-create the dialectics of liberation for the colonial world as it emerged out of the actual struggle of the African masses for freedom. Fanon saw the double rhythm of the colonial revolutions reflected in *both* the destruction of the old *and* the building of a totally new society. This was a break with all previous ideas about the African Revolutions—especially the idea that the African Revolutions had to first undergo a national bourgeois revolution before they could go on to a socialist, humanist society.

It is with this crucial situation facing the revolutionary masses of Southern African and Zimbabwe that Fanon's philosophy and understanding of the colonial revolutions assumes a greater concreteness for today than it may have had 17 years ago.

Fanon's commitment to the African masses, as the only real force and reason that could bring about a true revolutionary change in Africa, was total—and his analysis of African society, carried out in the very practice of revolution, was a concrete revelation that the African masses were the decisive element in African nationalism that could both achieve the goals of nationalism *and* move beyond them to international freedom. This concept was grounded in the specific historical existence of the African masses, who, out of necessity, demanded the creation of a dialectic of liberation.

Some have tried to reduce Fanon's creation of a dialectic of liberation to his writings on violence. But Fanon's conception of violence, within the context of decolonization, centered around what in the subject's objectivity was more than an expression of alienation, and was, as well a pathway to freedom.

When the Algerians dared to hit out against the barbarism of colonial rule, the concept of the superiority of French culture showed itself to be a dimension of racism by attributing the violence to the "innate criminality" of the North African mind. Fanon showed the concepts of Black alienation, of violence, and of emancipation, to be historically determined phenomena.

Not only that. Violence was not just having arms. Fanon took issue with what he thought Engels was saying on the theory of violence in *Anti-Dühring*, when Engels stressed that everything "depends on production." To Fanon, this sounded like "the leaders of reform... saying... 'With what are you going to fight the settlers? With your knives?'"

Fanon's contention was that at no time can violence be separated

and notes on colonialism, published by the editor under the title *Toward the African Revolution* (Grove Press, New York, 1967): "There comes a time when silence becomes dishonesty... The decision I have reached is that I cannot continue to bear a responsibility at no matter what cost, on the false pretext that there is nothing else to be done..."

African National Congress leader, Nelson Mandela, arrested in 1962 and sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island, is shown, above right, as he appeared before his arrest. At right, he sews clothes at Robben Island prison. His release from Pollsmoor, where he is now confined, became an international demand in 1985.



from ideology and that, in fact, revolutionary ideology is the greatest power. He then put the relationship of ideology to violence in its true historic context:

It so happens that the liberation of colonial countries throws new light on the subject. For example, we have seen that during the Spanish campaign, which was a very genuine colonial war, Napoleon, in spite of an army which reached in the offensives of the Spring of 1810 the huge figure of 400,000 men, was forced to retreat. Yet the French army made the whole of Europe tremble by its weapons of war. . . . Face to face with the enormous potentials of the Napoleonic troops, the Spaniards, inspired by an unshakeable national ardour, rediscovered the famous methods of guerrilla warfare, which, 25 years before, the American militia had tried out on the English forces.²⁰

Clearly, the violence that has a "cathartic effect"—which the American New Left took to mean violence, in and for itself—meant, to Fanon, the liberation struggle that is permeated with a philosophy of liberation.

The South African resistance movement, too, had to deal with the charge of violence, especially the leaders of a new organization, *Umkonto We Sizwe* (The Spear of the Nation), a new manifestation of Black nationalism which appeared in 1961. Here is how one leader, Nelson Mandela, responded at the Rivonia Trial, April 20, 1964:

I admit, immediately, that I was one of the persons who helped to form Umkonto We Sizwe, and that I played a prominent role in its affairs until I was arrested in August 1962. . . . But the violence which we chose to adopt was not terrorism. . . . I was the Secretary of the Conference and

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, Evergreen Black Cat Edition, New York, 1968), p. 64.

undertook to be responsible for organizing the national stay-at-home which was subsequently called to coincide with the declaration of the Republic. . . The African nationalism for which the ANC stands is the concept of freedom and fulfillment for the African people in their own land.²¹

IN EVERY CASE, it was a question of the relationship of masses in revolt against armed oppressors, and not the simplistic question of "violence" vs. "non-violence."

History, to Fanon, was not just past events but history-in-the-making by live men and women, peasant masses most of all. This activist-thinker was, however, not just an Algerian revolutionary, but involved in all of Black Africa. Here, too, he was not uncritical. At one and the same time, he enthusiastically greeted each African revolution as it won independence from imperialism, and criticized the separation of leaders from masses after independence was won. Thus, he was to write:

History teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism. . . It so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and the mass of the people, their laziness, and let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle, will give rise to tragic mishaps (p. 148).

Nothing, however, was to stem his over-riding concern—a global concern—for fighting imperialism. This is what permeated his work as an editor of the newspaper *El Moudjahid*, and his whole life in the years 1956 to 1961, when leukemia struck him down at the age of 36. Because he did have a global vision, he placed the African revolutions in the context of his view of world revolution and the urgent need to create a totally new kind of society. And yet what was to become a view of world revolution as well as the manifesto of the Third World was so concrete as to manifest worries of new fragmentations. Who today doesn't recognize the pertinence of Fanon's warning that "what must be avoided is the Ghana-Senegal tension, the Somalia-Ethiopia, the Morocco-Mauritania, the Congo-Congo tensions. . ." Here is how Fanon continued:

In reality the colonized states that have reached independence by the political path seem to have no other concern than to find themselves a real battlefield with wounds and destruction. It is clear, however, that this psychological explanation, which appeals to a hypothetical need for release of pent-up aggressiveness, does not satisfy us. We must once again come back to the Marxist formula. The triumphant middle classes are the most impetuous, the most enterprising, the most annexationist in the

²¹ From *The Sun Will Rise*, edited by Mary Benson (International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1976).



Patrice Lumumba organized the Congolese national movement in 1958 and led his people to freedom from Belgium in June 1960. He was assassinated five months later, at the age of 35, by U.S. imperialism's puppets. An official Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in 1976 deeply involved the CIA and the Eisenhower White House in the plot to murder the leader they termed "a dangerous force in the heart of Africa."

world (not for nothing did the French bourgeoisie of 1789 put Europe to fire and sword.)²²

Fanon's final decision—and only in part was it due to his terminal illness—was not to write the book he had planned on the Algerian Revolution, nor even to extend it only to African Revolutions, but to develop a world view of masses in motion, uprooting the old order as they created totally new human relations. He called it *The Wretched of the Earth*.

THE MAIN FOCUS of *The Wretched of the Earth* is in three chapters dealing with "Spontaneity," "National Consciousness," and "National Culture." In these chapters Fanon is not speaking as a psychiatrist, nor as an angry prophet demanding retribution in blood for wrongs done, but as an activist-thinker acutely aware that in the historical process of revolution there exists simultaneously *both* revolution and counter-revolution.

The chapter on "Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness" analyzes the conflict that exists between the self-activity of the colonial masses, who would destroy colonialism root and branch, and the symbiotic relationship between the national bourgeoisie and the colonial power. This is a great contribution to revolutionary theory, and it also represents what is profoundly new in Fanon's ideas that separates him from all the other theorists of the African revolutions. The recognition of this conflict between the leadership of the peasant masses of Africa is not presented as an abstraction, but is directly related to Black leadership, to revolutionary national leadership, to Black culture.

²² From notes of Fanon's, 1960. included in *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 187.

Fanon points out that there exists a time lag, a difference of rhythm, between the national party and the masses of people. The rank and file demand a total improvement of their lot, while the leadership seeks to limit and to restrain. This is why the rank and file feel so cheated after a prolonged struggle which has been declared victorious by the leaders.

There is a built-in conservatism both within the elitist native intellectual class and the organizational forms that this class builds within the colony to mobilize and bring pressures on the colonial administration. The elitist intellectual leadership class, in spite of its conflicts with the white colonial administration, is a privileged section within colonialism.

The organizations that the elite build to combat colonialism—the national party, the trade union, etc.—are copies of European institutions which are unrelated to the struggle for freedom in the African colonies. Yet, "the elite will attach a fundamental importance to organization, so much so that the fetish of organization will often take precedence over a reasoned study of colonial society. The notion of the party is a notion imported from the mother country" (p. 108).

The importation and the mechanical application of the European vanguard type of political party to a colonial political situation, for Fanon, was a serious challenge to the success of the colonial revolution. To him, it meant that the elite national leadership was completely unaware of the indigenous organizational forms that the colonial masses had developed in the course of the long struggle against their colonial masters. Not only were the leaders not aware of these indigenous organizations, they were even too lazy and indifferent to find out about them. They simply brought in the European political party and proceeded to focus their organizing work solely around the skilled workers and civil servants in the cities—a tiny portion of the colonial population.

This type of organizational attitude on the part of the national leadership was politically retrogressive and Fanon opposed it vigorously for obvious and concrete reasons.

The reality of the colonial world is that the overwhelming element in the population is poor peasants who are brutally exploited, miserably treated and starved by colonialism, which at the same time robs them of their homeland. And, of all the classes in the colonial world, it is the poor peasants who stand in direct confrontation to the government and the white ruling class. Each day, every member of the poor peasantry has to struggle to survive and fight in order to retain a scrap of humanity. Too, on numerous occasions the peasants have rebelled against their colonial masters and suffered grievously for failure at the hands of the colonial police and the military.

To Fanon, a disregard for the Black peasant masses, the only class in the colonies which kept the national consciousness alive by direct opposition to colonial exploitation, was tantamount to turning one's back on the revolution.

If the national party did pay attention to the colonial masses, they saw them as "blind inert tactical force: brute force, as it were" (p. 123), around which the national parties tried to erect an *a priori* program. This attitude of the national party, the elite leadership, to the peasant masses, Fanon reasoned, is due to the dual nature of *both* the party form *and* the leadership, where "the will to break colonialism is linked to another quite different will; that of coming to a friendly agreement with it" (p. 124).

The new national bourgeoisie does not end its connection with colonialism once independence is gained. The national middle class does not repudiate its own nature, insofar as it is bourgeois, that is, insofar as it is a tool of capitalism, nor does it make itself the willing tool of that revolutionary capital which is the people. The bourgeoisie of the ex-colony is weak and dependent upon world capitalism and because it has no link with the masses, it cannot throw off its colonial past, and, to hide its weakness, it commits all sorts of chauvinistic acts and futile militant gestures. When it nationalizes, or "Africanizes," institutions, Fanon says, it does so in the interest of its own privileges and not in the interest of the masses. Fanon criticizes this type of nationalization because it ends in rigid state control of consumer goods by the civil servants. There is praise for the leaders everywhere, but there is also widespread discontent among the masses: "The party, instead of welcoming . . . the free flow of ideas from the people up to the government, forms a screen, and forbids such ideas" (p. 123).

Never could what Fanon was talking about be better understood than now. Here is how one West African describes the situation in Nigeria today:

One thing that has been lacking in all the literature on Africa is the sense of a class consciousness. One talks of "Africans." Nobody talks of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung in the same breath, but somehow that sort of distinction is always missing in an analysis of Africa. Nigeria deserves emphasis on account of its sheer size: one out of every four Africans is a Nigerian and so, in that respect, what goes on in Nigeria is of tremendous importance to what happens in other parts of Africa.

The Nigerian press just says there has been a demonstration in South Africa and so many people were killed. There is never any mention of what they are protesting about. The Nigerian government does not want any aspect of a movement of a people against a ruling class brought up because it couldn't stand much scrutiny.

Someone wrote a letter to a Nigerian newspaper and said, "What is

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There are classes in Africa. And events in Africa will continue to confuse, to befuddle, unless we face the fact that there are people in whose interest it is that things remain just as they are. . . . At the moment there is a new Constitution being debated in Nigeria. And right there in the Constitution it says Nigeria is made up of so many tribes! There is a class in Africa in whose interest it is that there should be tribes. What the masses of Nigerians are talking about has absolutely nothing whatever to do with tribes. They are talking about bread and butter issues. They are talking about inflation, which in Nigeria is running at about 40 percent. And there is an enormous gap in wages. So you really can't fool the people who are being oppressed about whether you have a new society. It is the intellectuals who get fooled. . . .

What we have happening in Africa now is that there are changes coming from below. It's been a long time since imperialism was overthrown. Very soon it will be 20 years since Nigeria got independence, so the argument that we are being held back by the foreigners will soon start to make no impression on the people. I think we are entering the period where what will happen in Africa next will be mass- and class-oriented. Maybe the revolution people have been talking about will actually begin to happen.

FANON'S DEVELOPMENT as a revolutionary thinker was part of a triangular relationship of Africa, the Caribbean and France, which presented him with such deep contradictions at every level of human relations that he confronted the limitations of a merely psychiatric interpretation of subjectivity. He thus began his search for a philosophy of human liberation that could match the total transformation of society occurring in the Third World.

In the chapter on the "Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon states: "The party leaders behave like common sergeant-majors, frequently reminding the people of the need for 'silence in the ranks.' This party that used to call itself the servant of . . . the people's will, as soon as the colonial power puts the country into its control, hastens to send the people back to their caves" (p. 183). Fanon hastens to say that this "treason" is social, rather than individual.

Although Fanon paints a picture of the decrepit national bourgeois party in ex-colonial countries, he was not pessimistic about the future of the African Revolutions. There must be a theory of revolution wedded to the mass struggles for freedom and above all, the Black masses must not be considered as muscle only, but as human beings with ideas.

Fanon's analysis of the "Nationalist Consciousness" was a concrete breakthrough on the retrogressive role of so-called vanguard leadership in our age, a scathing critique not only of African, but also of European elitism.

He first reminded the Europeans that "not long ago Nazism transformed the whole of Europe into a veritable colony" (p. 101). He

then showed that the two greatest events in 1956-57 were "Budapest and Suez"; in the case of the first, it was a Humanist liberation struggle against totalitarian Communism, and in the second, the Third World opposition to Western imperialism.

Fanon made clear the necessity not to mimic Europe: "Today we are present at the stasis of Europe. Comrades, let us flee from this motionless movement where gradually dialectic is changing into the logic of equilibrium. Let us reconsider the question of mankind" (p. 314).

By relating his analysis to the first wave of revolutions in Africa, Fanon has shown that any leadership that does not spring out of, and retain dependence upon, the self-activity and the self-development of mass activities for freedom, will ultimately find dependency upon neo-colonialism.

When Fanon asked his African comrades to turn their backs on Europe, he did not have alone the subject of racism in his mind. He wanted them to flee from the "motionless movement of Europe where gradually dialectic is changing into the logic of equilibrium"—where the static forms of party, unions, laws and culture, conceal the true condition of men and women and attempt to stultify the self-development of humanity. "This new humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism both for itself and for others. . . National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension. . . For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades. . . we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man" (pp. 246-7, 316).

Fanon's internationalism is not just rhetoric or an attempt to avoid the question of racism. We must realize that Western imperialism has taken all from Africa, and given back nothing. African nations are still producers of raw material for the world market.

The third crucial chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth* is on "National Culture." Why was Fanon so concerned with "National Culture"? After all, culture is a natural thing; people live within a culture and they build a culture out of various means and under different conditions. We recognize this universal aspect of culture, but it was not so universally recognized that under colonialism the cultures of the colonial peoples are suppressed cultures, like the colonized people themselves. And, that a foreign culture has been imposed in the place of their former indigenous culture. It is in the relationship between these two cultures that Fanon was seeking revolutionary development.

African intellectuals, particularly those of Senegal, developed the theory of "Negritude" as an answer to the European contention that the Black world had no culture. They did a great deal of intellectual work in re-discovering Africa's rich cultural heritage. They also

organized societies and set out with great creative energy to educate European intellectuals about African art, African music, African dance, and above all the African's humanity.

HOWEVER, IN THE HARSH reality of the colonial world, not only is this not enough, but the leaders of what was once revolutionary *Negritude*, like Senghor, are actually carrying out the Francophile imperialist policy. So thoroughly disgusted was Fanon with the leaders in power who had been creators of the *Negritude* theory, that he turned in utter indignation against the very closest comrade, the greatest poet, the one from whom he learned both revolutionary *Negritude* and national struggle, Aimé Césaire, when he became mayor and welcomed the Gaullist, Malraux, to Martinique in 1958.



Ezekiel Mphahlele

To Fanon, culture without revolution lacks substance. He maintained that culture must not be mere "folklore" of an "abstract populism," but something that had to validate itself through the struggle for freedom.

Bringing to life the culture of an oppressed people is not just a question of harking back to history, but lies in grasping the reality of where that culture is today. If people are oppressed and impoverished, their culture suffers inhibition and lack of creativity. Only through the struggle for freedom will that cultural resurgence take on meaningful substance.

Ezekiel Mphahlele is quite eloquent on this point, and, in praise of the American Blacks, he reminds us that it is not our "Negritude" that will be brought to account during our struggles, but our "mastery of the techniques for bringing down the white power structure that will count. And, I insist, that this very struggle defines a culture. . . Culture and political struggles define each other, and feed on each other, all the way."²³

The question of culture, when it is the culture of revolution, is multi-dimensional; and sometimes what appears the least important becomes the most important. This became especially true during the Soweto

²³ From the Introduction to the 1971 American edition of *Down Second Avenue* (Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1971).

revolt, when, seemingly out of nowhere, it became known that not only were copies of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* circulating among the youth, but so were works by Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X.

As Sikose Mji, a 21-year-old South African woman, who was a member of the Black Consciousness movement and participated in the Soweto demonstrations put it: "We no longer feel isolated. As students we read a lot, even books which are banned. I don't know how students get these books, but we certainly have a lot, which we pass on to each other. As a result, we are more and more aware that other people are struggling too, and that other people are with us, and we with them."²⁴

In a word, it is not that there would have been no Soweto if they had not read Fanon, King and Malcolm X. It is that their not feeling isolated meant that the very ideas and revolts that they were engaged in were evidently revolts and ideas that others were part of. We have seen that to be true in every country of the world, whether it be U.S.A., Russia, China²⁵ or elsewhere.

It is a two-way road. The internationalism of the struggle in the U.S. certainly deepened with the struggles in South Africa and the Caribbean, and with the thought of Frantz Fanon.

²⁴ From an interview published in *Southern Africa*, Dec. 1976.

²⁵ See *Sexism, Politics and Revolution in Mao's China* by Raya Dunayevskaya (*Women's Liberation, News and Letters*, Detroit, 1977), especially the interview with the Chinese refugee in Hong Kong, who speaks of the frustration and anger of the Chinese students of Peking University when university officials blocked their attempts to socialize with the African students and learn from them about the African revolutions.



Latino students and community residents march through the streets of the South Bronx in New York in 1978, showing support for the takeover of Hostos Community College and demanding the city halt education cutbacks.

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Part IV

American Black Thought

FRANTZ FANON'S UNFLINCHING hostility to imperialism, especially the global tentacles of the U.S., didn't stop him from recognizing the *other* America. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he credited the Black American with being the most militant, and in *The Wretched of the Earth*, as we saw, he credited the American yeoman farmers with having been the first guerrillas in their struggles against British colonialism. Whether or not Frantz Fanon also knew that the concepts of both nationalism and *Negritude* had their predecessors in the 19th century's two-way road between American and African Black thought, the point is that the great affinity of ideas does not come from who was "first," but from the masses in motion.

It is masses in motion which produced a triangular relationship of ideas among Caribbean, African and U.S. Blacks, and which created the first Anti-Imperialist League in direct opposition to America's plunge into imperialism with the Spanish-American War. The News & Letters publication, *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*, sums this up precisely:

The 'psychology of Jim Crowism' is itself the result, not the cause, of monopoly capital extending its tentacles into the Caribbean and the Pacific as it became transformed into imperialism, with the Spanish-American War. . . It was long building up. Latin America had known, ever since 1820, that while the Monroe Doctrine could protect it from *European invasion*, there was no such protection from *American aggression for which the Doctrine was designed*.²⁶

The early Nyasaland revolt and Black America's relationship to it are detailed in *Independent African*: ". . . in 1899 the Afro-American Council . . . demanded an end to lynching and the enforcement of the 14th and 15th Amendments. This was the year of the Spanish-American War which gave the United States the Philippines; and DuBois and other Negro intellectuals, together with a large section of the Negro press,

²⁶ *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard* (News & Letters, Detroit, 1963, 1970, 1983), p. 16.

actively supported the recently formed Anti-Imperialist League. . ."²⁷

W.E.B. DuBois, alone, was prescient enough to draw from this horrid imperialist reality the generalization that the 20th century would be the century of color. It is true that this remark of genius was unfortunately burdened by his other theory that each nation had a "talented tenth" and it was this Negro talented tenth that would bring liberation. It is this other thesis that blinded him entirely to the greatness of Marcus Garvey in inspiring no less than six million American Blacks to join the Garvey movement. Indeed, DuBois was so ashamed of Garvey's superficial trappings that he did not see the movement's revolutionary nationalist substance; he joined with those Black intellectuals who asked for Garvey's deportation.

This did not stop other Black Americans (and West Indians and South Africans) from not only seeing the revolutionary nature of Garvey's movement, but aligning with *the* greatest revolution in world history—the Russian Revolution—and *its* thought. At a Black-Red Conference in Detroit in 1969, a young Black worker, in discussing the gulf between masses and intellectuals in our day, said:

Back in 1920, when nationalism among Black people first took its roots, the U.S. government tried to suppress the propagation of radical ideas that the Russian Revolution, which had just taken place three years before, in 1917, had instilled in Black people in this country. But small groups of Black radicals retaliated to the government's attack by publishing the fact that socialism stood for Black emancipation and that the reformers in America couldn't do anything to better the conditions of Black people. In the words of Claude McKay, a great Black poet of that time, 'I think that Afro-Americans have found that Marx had been interested and fought valiantly for Black emancipation'. . . That didn't stop him from criticizing the underlying prejudices of white Communists in America and telling about it to the Communist International. The Black struggle in America was important to Lenin. The word 'nation' didn't mean just a national group or a country that was being oppressed. It also included minority groups within a given nation. He said it wasn't enough to be for a revolution, you have to support national struggles that developed along the lines of independent mass activity. . . The question is, can a genuine Marxism as practiced by both Marx and Lenin in their time, be applied to our day?²⁸

BLACK THOUGHT, in post-World War I, U.S.A., disclosed many tendencies—from A. Philip Randolph, who

²⁷ This quotation from an article by George P. Marks is cited in *Independent African* by George Shepperson and Thomas Price (University Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1958), p. 101.

²⁸ Raymond McKay in *A Report on the Black-Red Conference, Detroit, Mich.—Jan. 12, 1969* (News & Letters, Detroit, 1969). See also Claude McKay's speech at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922, quoted in *American Civilization on Trial*, p. 21.



W.E.B. DuBois



Marcus Garvey



Amy Garvey



Claude McKay

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both edited the *Messenger* and organized the Pullman workers; through the Harlem Renaissance, which, though it maintained a division between intellectuals and workers, did, nevertheless, develop Black consciousness; to, at one and the same time, the massive Garvey movement and the emergence of Black Marxists.

As in every revolutionary period, new forces arose. In 1925, long before the Women's Liberation Movement of our day raised the challenge to male leadership, Amy Garvey hurled this at the Black leadership:

A race must be saved, a country must be redeemed. And unless you strengthen the leadership of vacillating Negro men we will remain marking time. We are tired of hearing Negro men say that a better day is coming while they do nothing to usher in the day. We are becoming so impatient that we are getting in the front ranks and serve notice on the world that we will brush aside the halting, cowardly Negro men, and with prayer on our lips and arms prepared for any fray, we will press on and on until victory is ours. Mr. Black Man, watch your step. Strengthen your shaking knees and move forward or we will displace you.²⁹

It is true that at the next great divide also—the Depression and the creation of the CIO—W.E.B. DuBois kept himself far away from labor. But he continued his profound scholarship. To this day, his *Black Reconstruction* is the only true history of the Reconstruction period and the great contributions of the freed Negroes following the Civil War.³⁰

It is only in our age, especially in 1955 with the emergence of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, that a leader arose that at least recognized that it was not he who created the movement, but the movement that created him. Martin Luther King, Jr. became the most prominent leader to articulate and to sense the power that resided in Black mass action in breaking down the walls of segregation and discrimination. The fundamental separation between King and the older Civil Rights organizations was just this recognition of masses in action as power. It was this and not the discovery of a "new and powerful weapon, non-violent resistance" that made him a leader.

²⁹ From the Editorial in *Negro World*, Oct. 24, 1925, reprinted in *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*, edited by Gerda Lerner (Random House, New York, 1972).

³⁰ The irony is that, by 1944, the Black intellectuals' analyses of what was the truth of both the Black condition and Black thought was subordinated to the analysis espoused by Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist, in his *American Dilemma*. All one has to do to see the depth of Black thought and the shallowness of white intellectual thought is to examine the actual writings by DuBois, Bunche, and Redding, deposited with the Schomburg Collection, and compare them with the "Methodological Note on Valuations and Beliefs" that Myrdal constructed. See also Raya Dunayevskaya's critique, "Negro Intellectuals in Dilemma," written in 1944 and reprinted in *News & Letters*, Feb. 1961.



Black youth demanding equality in Birmingham, Alabama, withstand full force of the fire hose turned on them during demonstrations in 1963.

The older Civil Rights organizations, like the NAACP and the Urban League, had become highly specialized organizations with highly skilled staffs concentrating their efforts in the courts and lobbying in Congress to attain better treatment for Black people. The restrictive nature of the operation of these organizations didn't allow for any mass participation or creativity in the struggles for liberation. In contrast to the "club character" of the NAACP, King could write in 1956 of how 42,000 Black people in the Old South organized a strike, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, against segregated buses and ushered in the Black Revolution of the 1960s.

King dealt with the efficacy of non-violent resistance as his main theme. But listen to what one Civil Rights activist, who had put his life on the line in the 1960s said:

The thousands that were in the streets in Birmingham created a confrontation that meant battle to the death between two absolutely opposing ways of living and thinking. Yes, they wanted to kill us. And non-violence is a myth. How the hell do they think we survived in the string of Freedom Houses scattered across the entire South, often with one field worker 40 or 50 miles from another? We were armed. Or the people in whose homes we stayed were. And when the KKK came around and shot into the house at night, we shot back at their cars. Even when

it wasn't a question of shooting back, either because you had no gun or because of 'orders,' you knew that the opening of the freedom campaign in a town meant a declaration of war with its racist rulers.

But King did know how to listen to the voices from below and therefore was able to represent them in a boycott that lasted 382 long days, during which the movement was in mass assembly three times a week, daily organized its own transportation, and moved from a struggle against segregated buses to a demand for hiring Black bus drivers—and won on both counts.

Over the next decade, King was actively involved throughout the South. He also tried to give philosophical expression to the struggle against segregation. In his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" to the white clergymen who objected to "illegal acts," King wrote: "We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything that the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal.'" "Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an 'I-it' relationship for the 'I-thou' relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things."

King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" certainly represented his high point in the first phase of the Civil Rights Movement. He had caught the mass self-activity, the masses' determination to be free, as the key to overcoming segregation. It was not the legalisms of segregation and desegregation, but masses as Reason, that would establish something entirely new.

WHEN THE STRUGGLE moved to the North, the civil disobedience tactics for a lunch counter was not the issue. The right to shop and eat was not the question, but the right to a job. It was then that the Black population moved to expand their struggle beyond civil disobedience with Watts 1965, followed by Newark, Buffalo, Atlanta, Chicago and many others over the hot summers, and finally Detroit, 1967. King did not know how to respond to those voices.

The challenge was not alone to "whitey," but to Black leadership, Black thought, to reorganize itself and face what the Black masses were acting out—that this system had to be destroyed, root and branch. It was during this period that King's separation from the mass movement was most pronounced. Where the Black masses had accepted non-violence as a tactic on their way to total liberation, they—because the issue was total liberation, not non-violence vs. violence—were willing to risk all in taking their struggle in a new direction.

Two developments wedded King back to the movement—the Vietnam War and the emergence of labor, Black labor. The Vietnam War was a testing ground for many. For white youth, it meant the mass

activity against U.S. imperialism for a full generation. But it was mass activity whose radical seeds were planted in the Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960s. When Vietnam became "the question," many white radicals dropped completely out of the Civil Rights Movement to be where they felt "the action" was. As a result, some of the Black-white unity so necessary for a radical transformation of this society was lost by the casual way so many white radicals dropped out of the Black struggle. The lack of white student response to the killings at all-Black Jackson State right after the mass outpouring against Nixon's bombing of Cambodia and the killings of protesting students at Kent State University was a most concrete manifestation of this separation.

The Black youth on the other hand did not make a separation between Black liberation and anti-war. Their answer was articulated by Carmichael's "Hell no! We won't go!" And at the same time they continued the question of Black power in all phases of their lives—from the campus, to jobs, to those urban revolts.

For King, too, Vietnam became a test, one in which he spoke out against the war and thus articulated what the Black masses were doing—our liberation fight is at home, not with American imperialism abroad.

Black labor was also on the move. The particular here for King was the sanitation workers on strike in Memphis. King chose to align with their struggle. At the same time, he was planning a march of all the poor, employed and underemployed, Black, Brown, Native American and white—the Poor People's March—which would as well coincide with the anti-Vietnam War protests. *It was at this point that on April 4, 1968, he was gunned down.*

1968 was a turning point in more than the Civil Rights movement, or the anti-Vietnam War movement. The murder of Rev. King was tragedy enough, and yet we seemed still to be at the height of the movement both nationally and internationally. The global highpoint, after all, was Paris, May 1968. It was first then that a great youth movement gained the support of no less than ten million workers, and made everyone think that we would finally both stop the Vietnam War and end the whole capitalistic, racist, sexist, imperialist system.

It is true that 1968 so shook the system to its foundations that the capitalists have never forgotten it, to this day. But the truth is that the lesson for the movement was that activism, activism, activism, while leaving theory to be caught "en route," simply will not do. It is this recognition that there must somehow be a new relationship of theory to practice that characterizes the 1970s, but gives the rulers and their ideologues the illusion of quiescence. It is within this context that we need to take a second look at the new young Black leaders who arose in the 1960s and ask why, though not bound by any theory of non-

violence, they did not achieve any more, and were further removed from the masses than King was.

For one thing, they had no respect for the masses. Stokely Carmichael when he raised the slogan "Black Power," was responding to a new stage in mass consciousness. But both Carmichael and SNCC were to remain elitist in their relationship to the Black masses. SNCC never became more than an organization of organizers.

Secondly, though the new young leaders considered themselves more internationalist than King, the truth is that it was the Montgomery Bus Boycott which found an immediate, intense response with Black South Africans, who launched a bus boycott of their own. On the other hand, the most well-known young leaders were everywhere *but* where the uprisings were taking place, as they reached the high-point of the Detroit rebellion. When the Black rebellions were on the verge of burning every American city, making it impossible for the capitalist economy to function, Carmichael was in Cuba praising the "socialist successes" of Castro.

Since then, Carmichael has been to Africa to see Nkrumah after his removal from power, in Ghana, and now in the '70s, Carmichael has come back with his All African People's Revolutionary Party, which proposes the total abandonment of any idea of serious mass action for African-Americans. He has subordinated ideologically the entire question of African-American liberation to the achievement of African socialism. For him the question facing Black liberation in the U.S. is the liberation and unification of Africa under "scientific socialism." But he never bothered to question what happened to his leader Nkrumah and his call for Pan-Africanism except to say "neo-colonialism."

MALCOLM X GAINED a reputation as the angry young man of the Black Revolt. To this day, his great appeal is that he was a northern city Black man, addressing himself, to use his own words, "to the grass roots out there in the streets." He was not a part of the middle class Blacks who were leading the Movement, but he was *the* representative of urban northern Blacks, who cared little for the non-violent philosophy which was dominant in the Civil Rights movement, and who saw the goals of desegregation as a maneuver to stave off the real revolution. He spoke the language and the thoughts of the disinherited urban Black people that could not be articulated by any other prominent Black leader.

Malcolm X's rhetoric was the rhetoric of the class differences that exist between the Black masses and the Black leadership. In his speeches this was a reality of the movement, and he sought to illustrate these differences by drawing the analogy of the "house Negro" who had the thoughts and feelings of the master. He used the collective pronoun "we," when talking about himself and the other one, the "field Negro."



Malcolm X

who wanted to see the master's house burnt to the ground and the master dead.

Malcolm pinned the quality of "house Negro" onto the official Black leadership, with the warning to his audience that such leadership only desires a "Negro revolution" and not a Black revolution.³¹ In projecting this idea, Malcolm's language was colorful and often derisive, but it wasn't fantasy—it made a lot of sense to urban Blacks and exposed the fundamental lack of a philosophy of change which prevented the Civil Rights movement from advancing beyond integration and voting rights toward a real revolution.

It was the mass action of Black America that caused Malcolm to turn his back on the Black Muslim's mystification and retreat from the Black rebellion. He reluctantly left the folds of the Black Muslims when he began to reject capitalist institutions along with the false idea of the total separation of Blacks in white America. It was at this point, in 1965, that he, too, was felled.

Today, in the 1970s, we are witness to such separation of Black intellectuals from Black masses that there are no recognized national leaders. We are witnessing the maneuverings of Left Black intellectuals in the absence of any philosophy of revolution. There are some, like Baraka and Sadauki, who have some roots among Black workers and claim to be looking for theory—what Baraka calls an "ideology with three cutting edges—from nationalism to Pan-Africanism to socialism." But that view does not base itself either on the self-activity of the Black movement as it has developed over the past two decades, or on the socialism of Marx as he developed it both in relation to the Black Dimension in his day, and as separated from "vulgar communism" which had sought revolutionary change merely in the abolition of private property.³¹

Rather, there is an attraction to various types of vanguardism, most especially Maoism, which they think is a short-cut to a new society.

³¹ See *Marxism and Freedom* by Raya Dunayevskaya (Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1982), especially Chapter V, "The Impact of the Civil War in the United States on the Structure of Capital," and Chapter III, "A New Humanism: Marx's Early Economic-Philosophic Writings."

One would think that Mao's alignment with South Africa against Angola, an alignment which remains unchanged in post-Mao China, would have been enough. But Maoism is still in vogue among many Black intellectuals. That is not true among the Black masses. Even if we only look at fads, like Mao jackets, that swept the intellectual community here and in Europe, the fact is that it never caught on in the Black community. And in the movie *Car Wash*, the unforgettable scene was when the young Black Muslim turns on the son of the car wash owner, who, complete with Mao shirt, has been agitating among the workers and spouting quotations from Chairman Mao about the revolution. The young Black worker says, "When the revolution comes, we'll be running the place and you'll be washing the cars, and you can sing 'We Shall Overcome' in Chinese." Whereupon, he grabs the Little Red Book and throws it into the car wash.

This may not be a rejection of Mao's Thought *as thought*, but it is a fact that the Black masses could never be deluded that Maoism was synonymous with liberation, once the Sino-Soviet conflict led China to make its priority one and one thing only—anti-Russia—and thereby brought it close to apartheid South Africa in opposition to the MPLA's liberation struggle in Angola.

NOR HAVE THE BLACK MASSES been much enamoured of Communism. Even at the very high point of support for Angela Davis and opposition to U.S. imperialism which was trying to railroad her to jail, the support was by no means uncritical. A Black production worker with long experience in both the labor movement and the freedom struggles put it this way:

Some younger Blacks see in Angela Davis a martyr, and support her beliefs. They have no experience with the Communist Party in the 1940s and before. They only say that the Party went all out to support Angela. But if you talk to some older Blacks, they remember only too well the betrayal of the Black struggle in this country by the Communist Party during World War II. They remember how the Party betrayed the 'Double V' movement, and the March on Washington that brought into being the Fair Employment Practices Committee. They also saw the Communist Party crush the Hungarian workers' revolt. . . . Angela stated that she will work to free political prisoners all over the world. She could begin in Russia, where there are more political prisoners than in any other country in the world. . . . One can understand the support people have had in this country for Angela because she was a political victim, and a Black woman, but that is where much of the sympathy ends.

What is distinctive about the 1970s is that the absence of any accepted national leader, far from signalling a theoretic void, signals that there are new beginnings in the movement from below to work out a totally new relationship of theory to practice. Listen to these voices:

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● A YOUNG BLACK STUDENT from Michigan State University, in a review of *Stokely Speaks: Black Power Back to Pan-Africanism*, by Stokely Carmichael, wrote:

“ Blacks had asked Stokely why he was ‘going away when we need him most over here.’ They asked him ‘what does that [Africa] have to do with us when Harlem is on fire over here.’ And one sister spoke for many when she asked if he ‘had gone over to Africa and found another cause.’ This book is an attempt to answer these questions. However, Stokely succeeds in doing the exact opposite. The trail follows a Black intellectual from Mississippi and Black America to Guinea and Osagyefo Nkrumah’s arms.

The crucialness of historical movements is completely separated from Stokely’s talks, so much that he is removed from actual mass events on the historical stage. One speech, for instance, ‘Dialectics of Liberation,’ was given in England at the very moment Detroit and Newark burst forth with voices of revolt. Far from labeling Carmichael as an omniscient prophet, the fact that the Blacks did this without cue from Carmichael and other ‘leaders’ gives the lie to Carmichael’s ‘dialectics’ which is a ‘program’ for revolt. After this great mass-activity, Carmichael rose to take credit, but not until Black people asked him, ‘where were you, when we did our thing?’

... Pan-Africanism is an umbrella that Stokely Carmichael seizes for shelter from the ‘storms of Black America’ where unemployment, racism, and protest are rampant. Thus, *Stokely Speaks* but is anybody listening? ☹

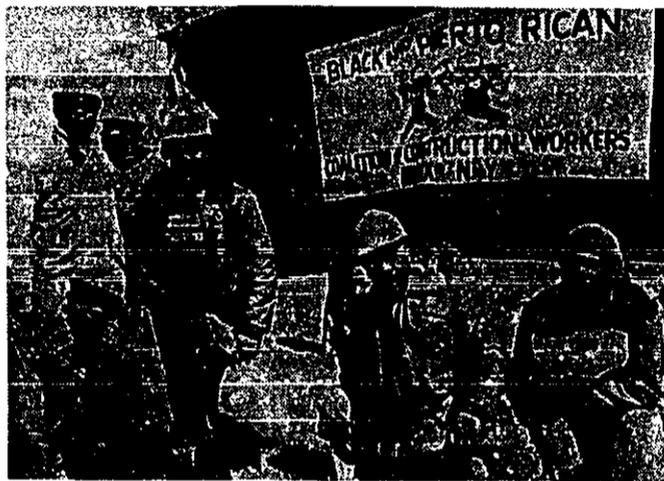
● A YOUNG AUTO WORKER IN DETROIT:

“ The need for workers controlling production is a daily demand in my shop. One woman had to work with a broken hand although the company doctor excused her from work. Metal shop workers never see a day go by without someone getting gashed. A worker forced to do poor work because of speedup was disciplined without protest from the union representative. Every worker knows exactly what problems he or she faces due to production, at work and at home.

At the factory where I work, Maoists represent the old left. During recent contract negotiations, you could see how the Maoist factions and union bureaucrats are similar. Neither wanted to hear the ideas of the workers. They always speak ‘for’ the workers.

Take the Women’s Liberation Movement. One article in a Maoist paper said that only after successful struggle by the proletariat can women be liberated. This ‘strategy’ is in spite of the fact that working women everywhere are demanding freedom by not separating their oppression as workers and as women.

The Maoists ask you to come to their rallies, read their literature and ask them questions, even to wildcat. They ask you for everything except your ideas. They would have you believe they could negotiate a ‘better’ contract with the capitalists, and that their Party rather than the Democratic party needs to control the union. But why not rank-and-file control of the union? If workers gained control of production they would replace the union and the party with the workers’ own organizations. ☹



Black and Puerto Rican construction workers join forces to defend and fight for expansion of affirmative action.

● A YOUNG BLACK LAUNDRY WORKER AND FEMINIST, invited to speak at a celebration of International Women's Day in 1978, said:

“ In my opinion, we need a new direction today. The women's movement is at a critical stage. There are many forces of counter-revolution fighting to keep women 'in their places.' At the same time, the women's movement has developed a schism within itself.

I participated this year in the National Alliance of Black Feminists, that gears their membership around professional women. They have totally separated themselves from working women and welfare mothers. They have become so narrow-minded by thinking that the answer is to become an integral part of this society, that it limits their capacities to express their ideas on what feminism means.

I was also involved in supporting the women who were on strike from Essex Wire Co. in Indiana. They organized themselves to keep going for over a year. The company fired them, beat them, and shot them. The union sold them down the river. The strikers asked us to picket the UAW Solidarity House and we called NOW and other groups, but they didn't come. To me, it's a question of whether you are part of 'bourgeois feminism' or 'revolutionary feminism!'

But even among those who say they are revolutionary, there are many left groups who try to convince women to wait until 'after' the revolution to begin to fight for their freedom. They have gotten so far away from workers' thinking and from genuine revolutionary theory, that nothing can help them. It is up to those who *do* see workers as thinkers, women as thinkers.

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Women's Liberation has reached a new and powerful stage in the movement today. That is why the opposition is so vicious. But it has also reached a new stage in thought. Seeing 'Women as Reason' strips the fetishism off of women as commodities. It is the only way that sexism can be destroyed. ♪

● A STUDENT, active in the occupation of the '500' building for Hostos College in New York City, wrote of it:

“ The Hostos occupation shows that students are moving to use the campus themselves, not only as vehicles of protest, but also for the self-organization of their education.

The spirit of the occupation must be seen to be believed. The students are confident they can hold the building, and are even talking about building a gym in the lot outside '500' during the summer. Community support is so extensive that they have enough food donated to open a cafeteria. Students from Bronx Community, Brooklyn, Hunter and Lehman Colleges—most of them from Latino or Black groups—have also come to give support.

The range of discussions reflects the range of people taking part in the occupation: one student arrested in the take-over of the Statue of Liberty this year; another who works with the committee to Free the Four Puerto Rican Nationalists; a recently graduated student who had intended to leave for Puerto Rico but now will stay to participate in the struggle; and participants in the struggle to save nearby Lincoln Hospital.

The power of the struggle is just too immense for the police to make any moves right away, and the students and supporting faculty will continue to transform the deserted building into a college under their own collective control. Whether or not the struggle at Hostos does spread, the power of this occupation shows that what happens to this school is a focal point for all oppressions and grievances felt by the students and community in this area. ♪

● AND BLACK PRISONERS, who have become some of the most prolific and probing of writers, penned the following:

“ They are building up this place to really be a concentration camp; it's not even conceivable in the minds of a free country or people, that this camp is really a part of the state of Illinois. They attempt to contaminate the resident body here with the sick disease of hate—Would you believe that the prison officials have almost what we can call a Black House and a White House? It's like this camp has returned to the old laws of 1850.

I had a white friend here with me just a few months ago; he was forced to transfer over to the so-called good house, needless to say the almost all-white house. All this was just because I am Black and he is white. It's as open here as night and day; the prison officials will do all that they can to keep Black and white from reaching any type of understanding here behind the walls of this slave camp.
—Illinois Prisoner

Since the incarceration I have become politically aware toward our international conflict and our constant struggle for decolonization here in America. There are Third World people who have no employment, no homes or food or clothing. I am a poor Black currently locked up in the hole making 35¢ a day, five days a week, and trying learn all he can about his people and

other people's liberation movements and struggles —*Pennsylvania Prisoner*

I am a prisoner (female) and I am writing to ask you if you could send me some books. Others will be able to share them. If I was to tell you all I have learned, seen and experienced here it would fill at least ten books; I wouldn't be able to find an envelope big enough to hold the information I could send you on these supposed-to-be rehabilitation concentration camps.

I feel I am a political prisoner and a revolutionary, an activist and a socialist. They will never have my mind, nor will they have my thoughts, womanhood, belief, rights of pride or dignity or how I feel about the people. I will fight this system and capitalism until the day I die. —*Ohio Prisoner*



I am aware of the cold murder of Steve Biko. Things are not that much different here in this racist U.S.A., for we must struggle each day that passes to maintain our sense of purpose. . . . It is a daily move here by the so-called 'officers of the peace' to display their sick racism and discrimination to keep us fighting each other, while they stand aside with that sick smile on their faces.

My keeper so much desires that the bitterness created by the conditions of this hell will hurt us and destroy our souls; then the enemy can claim another victory. I will always feel pain in my soul, but I will continue to refuse to allow the fires of hell to break me and cripple my mind. I am reading and opening a new awareness in my mind that will enable me to move with understanding and not confusion. ♪ —*Washington Prisoner*

Some of the theses that young Blacks are writing open new avenues entirely. Take an Eritrean student our attention was drawn to who is writing a work on Fanon and the early 20th century Italian revolutionary, Gramsci. It isn't that those two thinkers were contemporaries either in time or subject. But so passionate is the search for philosophy and so adamant is the youth to try to find theory separated from the single-party state, that an affinity of ideas is seen in the view of workers' councils rather than party, in philosophy rather than just "political manifestos." So deep is the view that what comes from all sorts of new forces of revolution—be they peasants, women, youth—that the supposedly quiescent '70s see new beginnings in discontinuity that is continuity with Marxism, but for our day, rather than for "orthodoxy" which had become icon-worship.

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LET US DRAW THE STRANDS together. American Black thought as it moves to touch the 1980s has the richest of historical and global experiences to draw upon. With the great French Revolution which signalled the end of the *ancien régime* and gave birth to a new age of revolutions, came the Haitian Revolution.

In *American Civilization on Trial*, we have shown that the Black dimension has, since the beginning of the importation of slave labor from Africa, been the touchstone of American civilization, challenging American capitalism and putting to the test all movements to change social relations in America.

In the 19th century, the greatness of the Abolitionist Movement, Black and white, led both to the Civil War and to Marx. He not only created the International Workingmen's Association of British workers who held mass demonstrations to prevent the English ruling class from intervening on the side of the South, but changed the structure of his greatest work, *Capital*, under the impact of the Civil War and the struggle for the shortening of the working day that followed it.

The 20th century began with the Russian Revolution, and its promise of new human relations; that revolution retrogressed mid-stream, but our generation has seen that promise become global with the revolutionary emergence of the Afro-Asian, Latin American world striving to unite color and class.

It wasn't only that Lenin, in writing on the self-determination of nations, singled out the Negroes in America as part of his thesis. It was, as we saw, the actual relationship to what was later to be called the Third World that became key.

The concreteness of Marx's understanding of the American revolutionary process unfolds at every stage of social crisis in this country. Whether it was the industrial unions being born, or the emergence of a Women's Liberation movement, or the activity of anti-war youth—all have had the Black movement for liberation act as catalyst.

And yet, both within much of the Marxist movement and within much of the thought of Black intellectuals, there has been a neglect or abuse of this Marxist dialectical concept. The significance of the historical nature of the Black fight against capitalist racism has never been grasped by the established "Marxist" parties in the U.S., i.e., the Communist, Trotskyist and Maoist parties. They have given a lot of lip service in the fight against racism, but as a matter of political policy, Black Liberation has been jettisoned or submerged when it does not meet their political necessities.

Claude McKay, the American Black Marxist, had to sharply take issue with the U.S. Communists who dismissed Garveyism as mere

fakery, instead of seeing it as an expression of a great Black nationalism which Marxists had to see as integral to any American Revolution. The Communist Party has never acknowledged its contradiction when it attempted to submerge Black liberation struggles into the interests of U.S. and Russian imperialism during the Second World War.

THE THIRD WORLD THAT BURST onto the historic stage after World War II is not alone geographic or only of color, but is human forces and ideas of freedom, independent of all state powers and all ideologies which do not release but ensnare the drive for liberation. Nor is it only the magnificent spectacle of so many African countries gaining their independence. It is the new inter-relationship of the African and European revolutions, as witness the Portuguese revolution that started in Angola.

Just as it was the actual human contact between Portuguese soldiers and Angolan guerrillas that helped inspire the Portuguese revolution, it is the exchange of ideas today between the Angolan and Mozambican revolutionaries and the Soweto youth that is helping to sustain the crescendo of the South African revolt. For the Black masses of southern Africa, Angola and Mozambique have meant a renewed confidence in their own self-bringing forth of freedom, and a determination to settle for total freedom and nothing less.

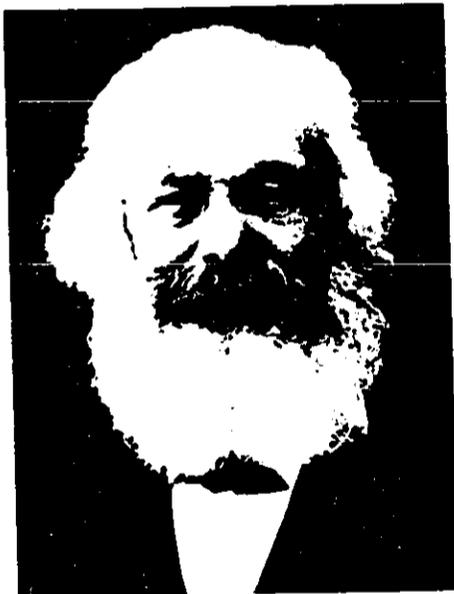
It is always easier to recognize a new stage of revolt than a new stage of cognition, especially when the movement *from practice* is first striving to rid itself of what the great English poet William Blake, in the age of revolutions—American, French, industrial, political, social, intellectual—had called "mind-forged manacles."

In our age, the period of the East European Revolutions as they first began in the mid 1950s brought Marx's Humanism onto the historic stage. It was also the period of the first African Revolutions. On the basis of these movements from below, Fanon was the first to work out a total philosophy of liberation for the Third World that would inter-relate to world revolution—"a new humanism." As Marxist-Humanists in the U.S. who oppose world capitalist-imperialism in all its forms, be that state capitalism calling itself "Communism," or so-called private capitalism calling itself "democracy," we have always fought those who would subordinate Black Liberation to the needs and political ambitions of either pole of world capitalism—the U.S. or Russia.

What has distinguished Marxist-Humanists from all other "Marxist" groups has been the recognition not only of the *autonomy* of Black liberation movements, but of *Black masses as vanguard of the American Revolution*.

Marxist-Humanists, as organization, as body of thought, as activists, have never developed separately from the Black masses in motion. What

makes the unity of Marx's new continent of thought and the Black liberation movement so imperative is that this nuclear world is poised on the brink of absolute destruction. To meet the challenge of the objective situation and the human passion for freedom that is so evident in the Black dimension, this capitalist-imperialist, exploitative, racist, sexist society must be uprooted. To have revolutionary ground for totally new human relations to be established, we need to work out a totally new relationship of theory to practice. *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought* is our contribution toward that end. We wish to unite it with yours as readers, activists, thinkers.



Last photograph of Karl Marx, taken in Algiers, North Africa in 1882.

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Appendix A

Critique of Negritude*

by
René Depestre



HAITI TODAY is the country where one can most trace the adventures of *negritude*, because ours is the land where, as Aimé Césaire has said, "it took its stand for the first time," and where it is now the ideology which feeds the most monstrous tyranny in contemporary history. That's why a critical examination of the concept of *negritude*, in the light of the horrible Haitian experience, can have an efficacious significance for all oppressed blacks. We know that all ideology, insofar as it represents something real and pursues certain objectives, has a tendency to give to the particular aspirations of one class an imaginary value. Marx called mystification such a process of deformation of reality.

In Haiti, pseudo-sociologists such as Francois Duvalier, studying the role of *negritude* in our national history always consider the concept as a thing in itself, rather than analyzing it in its relations with the true history of social connections. By separating the racial question from the economic and social development of Haiti, and assigning it an absolute character, by making it mythic, they have debased Haitian history by a chaotic succession of merely ethnic conflicts between mulattoes and blacks. . . . In the Haitian case, the racial question, far from being the determining factor in the development of Haitian society, is merely the mystifying form which, in the consciousness of two aristocratic rivals, serves to hide real interests and momentums from the class struggle.

Nonetheless, this racial question is a very important social reality in the history of Haiti. We know that Marx, by way of denying that spiritual dogmas had a decisive role in the historic process of determined

* Excerpts from a speech delivered by the Haitian poet, René Depestre, to the Tricontinental Congress in Havana in 1968.

societies, nevertheless believed that as social realities they could affect the general course of history. . . . Since 1946, the Haitian society has been the prey of general crisis, fundamentally due to the economic domination of the United States over the country, with color questions once again occupying the foremost ideologic and political place, but only in order to cover up the real content of the class struggle. Black middle-classes like Duvalier, who since 1946 has been allied to the black landlords and the mulatto "compradores," control political power, demagogically helping themselves to big notions of "*negritude*" and pretending to the black masses that it's they who are in power and that the "Duvalierist revolution" is a sparkling victory for *negritude*.

The awful Duvalier dictatorship has made the Haitians change the image that they've had of themselves. . . . In their eyes, Haiti has stopped being congealed into the mythic figure that has been patiently printed in the consciousness of every Haitian since schooldays: Haiti, first black republic of modern times, mythic fatherland of the black man, cradle and paradise of *negritude*! Haitians have discovered through unheard-of sufferings that, in a semi-colonial system, the power that should be spread among black, white, mulatto or Indian hands, remains invariably an instrument for ferocious dehumanization, in terms of man and his social and cultural setting. . . . Haitians behold blacks and mulattoes, tyrants, criminals without shame, obscurantists, Nazis, tonton-macoutes, because in fact they are without any individuating essence, they're as middleclass as the rest and at the moment of terrorist dictatorship in the capital, they are as capable of crimes as horrible as those Hitler committed in yesterday's concentration camps or those the yankees of the Pentagon perpetuate today in the two Vietnams.

Naturally, the tyranny of Duvalier offers a monstrous caricature of *negritude*, and it's not necessary to conclude. . . . that such a twisted rationale is fatally open to an enterprise involving the annihilation of the human condition. Socialism is a doctrine of the liberation of man, but national-socialism was an instrument for his extermination. . . . Today the black bourgeoisie, who possess neo-colonialist privileges of intrigues and violences in Africa and America, have prematurely seized upon the concept of *negritude* as an ideologic weapon because they justly know that. . . . this concept has powerfully expressed the double character of alienation among oppressed blacks. So this concept, for a given moment in the story of decolonization, became the affective reply of the black man, exploited and humiliated and facing the global contempt of the white colonist.

Thus, *negritude*, in the best sense of the word, was the cultural operation by which the black intellectuals of Africa and the two Americas recognized the validity and originality of negro-African cultures, the aesthetic value of the black race, and the capacity for respective peoples to exercise the right to historical initiatives that

colonization had completely suppressed. *Negritude*, in its most authentic sense, was at the outset (in the poetry of Césaire, for example) the influence upon consciousness of the fact that the proletarian black is doubly alienated: alienated on the one hand (like the proletarian white) by being endowed with a work-power that is sold on the capitalist market; and alienated on the other hand by having a black pigmentation, alienated, that is, in his epidermal singularity. *Negritude* was the consciousness of this double alienation and of the historical necessity to go beyond it, by means of a revolutionary *praxis*.

We must not forget, with respect to racist dogma, that in the eyes of a great majority of whites, the permanent crime of the black man (besides his proletarian state) is that of his color. This odious mystification at an ideologic level continues to be a weapon one runs into in the United States, in South Africa, in Rhodesia, used against blacks. The epidermal singularity of the black or scorned man, instead of being taken for what it is, that is, one of the objective accidents that the history of humanity teems with, becomes a malefic essence, the sign of an absolute evil of the black social being in the consciousness of all the slavers of the world—the mark and stigmata of an unremissable inferiority. We've given a metaphysical and aesthetic significance to the color black as we have to the color white.

Negritude, in literature, in art as in ethnology and history was, from its inception, a form of authentic revolt opposed to the contemptible manifestations of racist dogma in the world. It was colonization which through gun, gunshot, and blood had opened the bleeding white-black contradiction in the very womb of universal history, in order to conceal and thereby justify the goings-on of capitalist exploitation. *Negritude* posed the necessity for going beyond that contradiction, not through a new mythic operation, but by way of a revolutionary *praxis* that was collective. Unfortunately, more often than not, the concept of *negritude* has been utilized as a myth which serves to conceal the presence of the black bourgeoisie on the scene . . . and, as any class which oppresses another class, it has need of an ideologic mystification to cover up the real nature of its established connections within the society.

Today, with mystificators both black and white, *negritude* implies the absurd idea that the Black is endowed with a particular "human nature," endowed with an essence that might only belong to him, and in that respect he is called upon, according to a publicist like Janheinz Jahn, to lend to Europe and the West I don't know what sort of "supplemental soul-life," of which occidental civilization is in need. For the president of Senegal, the poet Leopold Sedar Senghor, "emotion is black and reason Greek."

In such a way all class contradictions are drowned in abstraction, and the black bourgeoisie of Africa and America can securely and with

the blessing of neo-colonialism freely exploit the black workers in the name of a spiritual commune. . . . According to this elementary and insolent logic, *negritude* as thus understood, far from articulating a revolutionary enterprise of total disalienation and decolonization of Africa and the two black Americas, merely arrives at covering up the fact that it is one of the columns holding up the cunning, snares and perfidious actions of neo-colonialism. Separated from the historical context of revolution across the board of the Third World, arbitrarily separated from the immediate exigencies of the global, tricontinental struggle of under-developed peoples against imperialism and neo-colonialism, *negritude* defines an unacceptable "black zionism" with the help of which we would here like to dismiss black peoples from the duty of making a revolution.

The Politics of Language in African Literature*

by
Ngugi wa Thiong'o



THE LANGUAGE of African literature cannot be discussed meaningfully outside the context of those social forces which have made it both an issue demanding our attention, and a problem calling for a resolution. On the one hand is—let us call a spade a spade—imperialism in its colonial and neo-colonial phases continuously pressganging the African hand to the plough to turn the soil over, and putting blinkers on him to make him view the path ahead only as determined for him by the master armed with bible and sword. In other words, imperialism continues to control the economy, politics and cultures of Africa. But, on the other hand—and pitted against it—are the ceaseless struggles of African people to liberate their economy, politics and culture from that Euroamerican-based stranglehold and to usher in a new era of truly communal self-regulation and self-determination. It is an ever-continuing struggle to seize back their creative initiative in history through a real control of all the means of communal self-definition in time and space. The choice of language and the use to which language is put are central to a people's definition of itself in relation to its natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. Hence, language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century.

Unfortunately writers who should have been mapping paths out of that linguistic encirclement of their continent also came to be defined and to define themselves in terms of the languages of imperialist imposition. Even at their most radical and pro-African, in their sentiments and articulation of problems they still took it as axiomatic

* A Robb Lecture given by the Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in 1984 at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

that the renaissance of African cultures lay in the languages of Europe. I should know!

The lengths to which we were prepared to go in our mission of enriching foreign languages by injecting Senghorian "black blood" into their rusty joints, is best exemplified by Gabriel Okara in an article reprinted from *Dialogue, Paris in Transition* magazine in September 1963: "As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as a medium of expression . . . In order to capture the vivid images of African speech, I had to eschew the habit of expressing my thoughts first in English. It was difficult at first, but I had to learn. I had to study each Ijaw expression I used and to discover the probable situation in which it was used in order to bring out the nearest meaning in English. I found it a fascinating exercise." Why, we may ask, should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed in taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues? Why should he see it as his particular mission? We never asked ourselves: how can we enrich our languages? How can we "prey" on the rich humanistic and democratic heritages in the struggles of other peoples in other times and other places to enrich our own?

Language as communication has three aspects or elements. There is first what Karl Marx once called the language of real life, which is basic to the whole notion of language, its origins and development. This refers to the relations that people enter with one another in the labour process, the links they necessarily establish among themselves in the act of a people, a community of human beings, producing wealth or means of life like food, clothing, houses. A human community really starts its historical being as a community of cooperation in production through the division of labour, from the simplest between man, woman and child within a household, through the more complex divisions between branches of production (between let's say those who are solely hunters, solely gatherers of fruits, solely workers in metal, etc.) to the most complex divisions in modern factories where a single product, say a shirt or a shoe, is the result of many hands and minds. Production is cooperation, is communication, is language, is expression of a relation between human beings and it is specifically human. The second aspect of language as communication is speech and it imitates the language of real life, i.e., communication in production. The verbal signposts both reflect and aid communication or the relations established between human beings in the production of their means of life. In fact, language as a system of verbal signposts makes that production possible. The spoken word is to relations between human beings what the hand is

to relations between human beings and nature. The hand through tools mediates between human beings and nature and forms the language of real life; spoken words mediate between human beings and form the language of speech. The third aspect is the written signs. The written word imitates the spoken. In fact where the first two aspects of language as communication through the hand and the spoken word historically evolve more or less simultaneously, the third aspect, the written, is a much later historical development. Writing is representation of sounds with visual symbols—from the simplest knot among shepherds to tell the number in a herd, through the hieroglyphics among the Aagiküyü gicaandf singers and poets of Kenya, to the most complicated and different letter and picture-writing systems of the world today.

Now, in most societies, the written and the spoken language are the same: they represent each other, so that what is on paper can be read to another person and be received as that language which the recipient has grown up speaking. In such a society there is broad harmony for a child between the three aspects of language as communication. His interaction with nature and with other men is expressed in written and spoken symbols or signs which are both a result and a reflection of that double interaction. The association of the child's sensibility is with the language of his experience of life.

But there is more to it: communication between human beings is also the basis and process of evolving culture. In doing similar kinds of things and actions over and over again under similar circumstances, similar even in their mutability, certain patterns, moves, rhythms, habits, attitudes, experiences and knowledge emerge. These are handed over to the next generation and become the inherited new basis for their further actions on nature and on themselves. There is a gradual accumulation of values which in time become almost self-evident truths governing their conception of what is right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, courageous and cowardly, generous and mean in their internal and external relations. Over time this becomes a way of life distinguishable from other ways of life, as people develop a distinctive culture and history. Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe. Values are the basis of a people's identity, its sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this is carried by language, which is the collective memory-bank of a people's experience in history.

Take language as communication. By imposing a foreign language and suppressing the native languages as spoken and written, the colonizer was already breaking the harmony previously existing between the African child and the three aspects of language as communication. Since the new language was a product reflecting the "real language of life" elsewhere, it could never, as spoken or written,

properly reflect or imitate the real life of that community. This may, in part, explain why technology always appears to us as slightly external, *their* product and not *ours*. The word *missile*, for instance, used to hold an alien faraway sound until I recently learnt its equivalent in Gikuyu, *Ngurukuhĩ*. Learning, for a colonial child, became a cerebral activity and not an emotionally felt experience.

Culture does not just reflect the world but actually conditions a child to see it in a certain way. Since the images of that culture are mostly passed on through orature and literature, the colonial child would now only see the world as in the literature of his language of adoption. It does not matter from the point of view of alienation—that is, of seeing oneself from outside as if one was another self—whether that literature carried the great humanist tradition of the best in Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac, Tolstoy, Gorky, Brecht, Sholokhov or Dickens: the location of this great mirror of imagination was necessarily Europe and its history and culture, and the rest of the universe was seen from that center.

Léopold Sédar Senghor has said very clearly that although the colonial language was forced upon him, if he had been given the choice he would still have opted for French. He becomes most lyrical in his subservience to French: "We express ourselves in French since French has a universal vocation and since our message is also addressed to French people and others. In our languages [i.e., African languages] the halo that surrounds the words is by nature merely that of sap and blood; French words send out thousands of rays like diamonds." Senghor has now been rewarded by being appointed to an honoured place in the French Academy—that institution for safeguarding the purity of the French language.

The twenty years that followed the Makerere conference gave the world a unique literature—novels, stories, poems, plays written by Africans in European languages—which soon consolidated itself into a tradition with companion studies and a scholarly industry. Right from its conception it was the literature of the petty bourgeoisie born of the colonial school and university. It could not be other than that given the linguistic medium of its message. Its rise and development reflected the gradual accession of this class to political and even economic dominance. But the petty bourgeoisie in Africa was a large class with many different strands. At one end of the spectrum were those who saw the future in terms of a permanent alliance with imperialism, in which they would play the role of an intermediary between the bourgeoisie of the western metropolis and the people of colonies. (This is the section which, in my book *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*,^{*} I described as the comprador bourgeoisie.) At the other end were those

^{*} *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, trs. by the author (London: Heinemann, 1981).

who looked towards a vigorous independent national economy in African capitalism or in some kind of socialism, and whom I shall here call the nationalistic or patriotic bourgeoisie. The literature written by Africans in European languages was specifically that of the nationalistic bourgeoisie, in terms of its creators, its area of thematic concerns, and its consumption.

Internationally, the literature helped this class—which, in politics, business and education, was assuming leadership of the countries newly emergent from colonialism, or of those struggling so to emerge—to explain Africa to the world; Africa had a past and a culture of dignity and human complexity. Internally it gave this class a cohesive tradition, and a common literary frame of references, which it otherwise lacked because of its uneasy roots in the culture of the peasantry and the culture of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. The literature added confidence to the class: the petty bourgeoisie now had a past, a culture and a literature with which to confront the racist bigotry of Europe. This confidence was manifest in the sharp tone of the critique of European bourgeois civilization; and the implication that Africa had something new to give to the world—which was particularly strong in the ideology of *négritude*—reflected the political ascendancy of the patriotic nationalistic section of the petty bourgeoisie before and immediately after independence.

We are talking initially of a literature whose background was the national-democratic revolutionary and anti-colonial liberation successes in China and India; the armed uprisings in Kenya and Algeria; and the independence of Ghana and Nigeria, with others impending. Yes, this literature was part of that great anti-colonial movement and general anti-imperialist upheaval in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. It drew its stamina and even form from the peasantry: their proverbs, fables, stories, riddles, and wise sayings. It was shot through and through with optimism. But later, when the comprador section assumed political ascendancy and strengthened rather than weakened the unbroken economic links with imperialism in what was clearly a neo-colonial arrangement, this literature became more and more critical, cynical, disillusioned, bitter and denunciatory in tone, and it was almost unanimous in its portrayal, with varying degrees of detail, emphasis and clarity of vision, of the post-independence betrayal of hope. But to whom was it directing its list of mistakes done, crimes and wrongs committed, complaints unheeded, or its call for a change of moral direction? The imperialist bourgeoisie? The petty bourgeoisie in power? The military, itself part and parcel of that class? It sought another audience, principally the peasantry and the working class or what was generally conceived as *the people*. The search for new audiences and new directions was reflected in the quest for simpler forms, in the adoption of a more direct tone, and often in a direct call for action. It

was also reflected in the content. Instead of seeing Africa as one undifferentiated mass of historically wronged blackness, it now attempted some sort of class analysis and evaluation of neo-colonial societies. But this search was still within the confines of the languages of Europe, whose use it now defended with less vigor and confidence. So its quest was hampered by the very language choice, and in its movement toward the people, it could only go up to that section of the petty bourgeoisie—students, teachers, secretaries, for instance—still in closest touch with the people. It settled there, marking time, caged within the linguistic fence of its colonial inheritance.

In fact, its greatest weakness still lay where it has always been, in its audience: the petty-bourgeois readership automatically assumed by the very choice of language. Because of its indeterminate economic position between the many contending classes, the petty bourgeoisie develops a vacillating psychological make-up. Like a chameleon it takes on the color of the main class with which it is in the closest touch and sympathy. It can be swept to activity by the masses at a time of revolutionary tide; or be driven to silence, fear, cynicism, withdrawal into self-contemplation, existential anguish, or to collaborating with the powers-that-be at times of reactionary tides. In Africa this class has always oscillated between the imperialist bourgeoisie and its comprador neo-colonial ruling elements on the one hand, and the peasantry and the working class (the masses) on the other. This very lack of identity in its social and psychological make-up as a class, was reflected in the very literature it produced: the crisis of identity was assumed in that very preoccupation with definition at the Makerere conference. In literature as in politics it spoke as if its identity or crisis of identity was that of society as a whole. The literature it produced in European languages was given the identity of African literature as if there had never been literature in African languages. Yet by avoiding a real confrontation with the language issue, it was clearly wearing false robes of identity: it was a pretender to the throne of the mainstream of African literature. The practitioners of what J. Jahn called neo-African literature tried to get out of the dilemma by over-insisting that European languages were really African languages or by trying to Africanize English or French or Portuguese usage while making sure it was still recognizable as English or French or Portuguese.

In the process this literature created, falsely and even absurdly, an English- (or French- or Portuguese-) speaking African peasantry and working class, a clear negation or falsification of the historical process and reality. This peasantry and working class, which existed only in novels and dramas, was at times invested with the vacillating mentality, the evasive self-contemplation, the existential anguished human condition, or the man-torn-between-two-worlds face of the petty bourgeoisie. In fact, if it had been left entirely to the petty bourgeoisie, African languages would have ceased to exist—with independence!

Chinua Achebe once decried the tendency of African intellectuals to escape into abstract universalism in words that apply even more to the issue of the language of African literature: "Africa has had such a fate in the world that the very adjective *African* can call up hideous fears of rejection. Better then to cut all links with this homeland, this liability, and become in one giant leap the universal man. Indeed I understand this anxiety. *But running away from oneself seems to me a very inadequate way of dealing with an anxiety* [italics mine]. And if writers should opt for such escapism, who is to meet the challenge?" Who indeed?

We African writers are bound by our calling to do for our languages what Spencer, Milton and Shakespeare did for English; what Pushkin and Tolstoy did for Russian; indeed, what all writers in world history have done for their languages by meeting the challenge of creating a literature in them. This process later opens the languages for philosophy, science, technology and all the other areas of human creative endeavor.

But writing in our languages—although a necessary first step in the correct direction—will not in itself bring about the renaissance in African cultures if that literature does not carry the content of our peoples' anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control; the content of the need for unity among the workers and peasants of all the nationalities in their struggle to control the wealth they produce and to free it from internal and external parasites.

In other words writers in African languages should reconnect themselves to the revolutionary traditions of an organized peasantry and working class in Africa in their struggle to defeat imperialism and create a higher system of democracy and socialism in alliance with all the other peoples of the world. Unity in that struggle would ensure unity in our multilingual diversity. It would also reveal the real links that bind the people of Africa to the peoples of Asia, South America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Canada and the USA.

But it is precisely when writers open out African languages to the real links in the struggles of peasants and workers that they will meet their biggest challenge. For to the comprador-ruling regimes, the real enemy is an awakened peasantry and working class. A writer who tries to communicate the message of revolutionary unity and hope in the languages of the people becomes a subversive character. It is then that writing in African languages becomes a subversive or treasonable offence, carrying the possibility of prison, exile or even death. For such a writer there are no "national" accolades, no new year honors, only abuse and slander and innumerable lies from the mouths of the armed power of a ruling minority—ruling, that is, on behalf of U.S.-led imperialism—who see in democracy a real threat. Democratic

participation of the people in shaping their own lives or in discussing their experience in languages that allow for mutual comprehension is seen as being dangerous to the good government of a country and its institutions. African languages addressing themselves to the lives of the people become the enemy of a neo-colonial state.

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Appendix C

Reagan's Imperial Invasion & Conquest of Grenada*

The Reagan-Style of the Brezhnev Doctrine Reveals Its Anti-Black Nature

THE LIES THAT KEPT emanating from the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon—before and after the occupation of Grenada—have a logic of their own. Inexorably they flow out of the Big Lie—Reagan's attempt to hide the relentless drive for a Pax Americana under the euphemism of "democracy."

The ideology of U.S. imperialist global counter-revolution is nothing other than the Brezhnev Doctrine, Reagan-style...

For one single moment, Speaker Tip O'Neill sounded as if he was with those who opposed the invasion of a tiny Black nation by the nuclear superpower, the U.S. Then he sent a Congressional so-called "Fact-Finding" mission to Grenada—which returned to endorse the invasion. It was not a unanimous conclusion, but the Minority Report (made by Black Congressmen Dellums and Stokes, and endorsed by the entire Congressional Black Caucus) was hardly given equal time. Not only did these Congressmen oppose the invasion, they testified to the fact that the U.S. forces "are engaging in illegal searches and seizures of people and homes as well as still weeding out members of the population for security or political reasons."

Here is how Congressman Dellums summed up his fact-finding: "As an American citizen, I was appalled by the U.S. invasion of Grenada, which I considered an undeclared act of war in violation of the Constitution, the UN and OAS Charters... I believe we're in gross violation of international law..."

It is true Reagan can depend on his capitalist-imperialist allies to oppose social revolution as totally as he does. But, as John Vinocur wrote from Paris, after the invasion of Grenada, "overnight every West European regards American missiles less as a protection than as a

* Lead-Editorial in December 1983 issue of News & Letters.

threat." If Reagan has disregarded that, it is because what preoccupies him is getting his unlimited militarization bills through Congress. He has succeeded in that, instigating such a patriotic hysteria ever since the 007 Korean airliner incident that Congress not only approved funds for the MX missile, but for nerve gas, too!

Here, then, is the real rub. We must, of course, call for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Grenada and all the gunboats sailing around the globe, from the Middle East to Central America to Asia. But that is not enough. We must stay the bloody hands of both nuclear superpowers.



The anti-nuke struggle, and the anti-military struggle in general, cannot stop the life and death struggle with capitalism—private and state—that is ready to unleash the nuclear holocaust, except through a total uprooting, social revolution. In that, we have all the world on our side, for it is the only way to achieve peace.

That is why even the correct slogan "the enemy is in your own country" is not sufficient. It may have sufficed *before* the world was divided into two power blocs. Presently, it is a trap to suck one into the *other* nuclear orbit, and thus doom both the advanced economies and the Afro-Asian-Latin American liberation movements. We have no time to waste on the Stalinized "Marxists," ex-Marxists, or Fidelistas who tailend and whitewash Communist tyranny.

It is equally true that preparation for war against Russia tomorrow is all out war against the American working people today, tomorrow, and the day after. That is why the point is not who throws or will throw the first stone, especially when that first stone will be the H-bomb. The point is: are you with the people struggling for a totally new way of life?

So universal is the feeling against the war that even the rulers play the game of peace and disarmament conference. That cannot, therefore, be what distinguishes us from them. Private or state-capitalism will

spare nothing to keep itself on top and the masses at the bottom. Armed with the H-bomb and the missile, they are ready to destroy civilization itself rather than allow the new human society to emerge.

To achieve a truly human life, we must not only be with the working people because they and only they oppose the war to the end, because they and only they are the future society, but also because we do not shift to their shoulders what is the task of all of us—the theoretic clearing of the ground for the reconstruction of society on new beginnings. These new beginnings start with integrating the philosophy of revolution into all revolutionary activities, as we oppose Reagan's warmongering and retrogressions at home as well as abroad. Only by making a philosophy of revolution inseparable from an actual revolution can we keep the revolution from aborting and win a new society on truly human foundations.

—Raya Dunayevskaya
November 14, 1983

Grenada: Counter-Revolution & Revolution

The Caribbean Today & the Challenge
from 30 Years of Movements
from Practice that were
Themselves a Form of Theory*

Dear Colleagues:

THE FACT THAT THE FIRST SHOT of counter-revolution in Grenada on October 19 was fired by the "revolutionaries" themselves, its Army, politically and militarily headed by Gen. Austin (plus Coard), demands that we take a deeper look at the type of revolution that erupted in Grenada in 1979. It is impossible not to be moved by the last words spoken by the leader of that revolution, Maurice Bishop, as, in utter shock, he looked at the Army shooting into the masses who had just released him from house arrest: "My God, my God, they have turned the guns against the people."

That does not free us from facing the stark fact that the first shot of counter-revolution came from *within* the revolutionary Party-Army-State. That first shot opened the road for the imperialist U.S. invasion that, it is true, lay in wait from Day One of the revolution. This, however, in no way absolves the "Party" of its heinous crime. The fact that Castro—though an "internationalist" who spelled out his solidarity in concrete acts such as sending Grenada doctors and construction workers, teachers as well as military advisers—nevertheless failed to develop the ideas that were at stake, left the masses unprepared for ways to confront the divisions within the leadership that would have gory consequences on October 19.

Instead of Castro focusing on a theory of revolution, he substituted and based himself on what he called the "principle of non-interference in internal affairs." He proceeded to praise Bishop for adhering to that "principle" by not asking for help in the leadership disputes—as if these were mere matters of "personality" and merely "subjective" rather than

* Excerpts from a Political-Philosophic letter by Raya Dunayevskaya, November 28, 1983.

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the result of the *objective* pull backward because the revolution itself was barren of a philosophy. Castro disregarded the dialectics of revolution—that is to say, the digging into what was coming *from below*, the *mass consciousness*, its *reasoning*. Instead, both he and the Grenadian leadership reduced ideas of freedom to "subjective, personality" matters.

Naturally, the savage, unprovoked, long-prepared-for imperialist invasion and conquest of Grenada made it imperative to expose its "Pax Americana" nature and intensify all our activities to get U.S. imperialism (with its East Caribbean stooges) out of Grenada.

The December 1983 *News & Letters* Lead-Editorial which was devoted to this, is, in fact, Part One of this study of the counter-revolution and revolution in Grenada. Indeed, this could be seen from its very title and subtitles that point to the fact that the ramifications of Grenada are by no means limited to the Caribbean, or even the whole Third World, but are so global that the whole question of war and peace in a nuclear world actually touches the very question of the survival of humanity...

In opposing the American imperialist invasion, and demanding the evacuation of all foreign troops from Grenada, we must not simply limit ourselves to actions of solidarity. Indeed, we must not only criticize Gen. Austin and the whole military "Revolutionary Council," who are to be brought to account, but also look at the 1979 revolution, both positively and negatively. That becomes of the essence now, if we are ever to stop counter-revolutions from arising within revolutions. In the half-century since the transformation of Russia into a state-capitalist society we have become witness to such degeneracy that an ideological debate is ended by murder.

The fact that these horrors can happen even where there is no material base for counter-revolution as there was in Stalin's transformation of a workers' state into a state-capitalist society, and where, as in Pol Pot's Cambodia, counter-revolution is spelled out as outright genocide against your own people—and that in the name of revolution!—demands that we never shut a relentless critical eye to all aspects of revolution and not just leave it at opposing imperialism. Nor must we limit it "internally" to bringing a General Austin to account, but also look at revolutionaries who, though they are now reaping the whirlwind, had helped shroud the void in philosophy with the absurd reductionism of "non-interference in internal affairs."

What history shows is that once the road to revolution seeks shortcuts, the revolution itself remains unfinished. What we see when the philosophy of revolution is separated from actual, social revolution is the attempt to force the concept of revolution through the barrel of a gun. That is what we saw in Grenada. This cries out for a totally

different attitude to a philosophy of revolution; without that no revolution can fully *self-develop*. What happened in Grenada can illuminate the contradiction of contradictions—counter-revolution from *within* revolution. It becomes necessary to trace the Grenadian Revolution from its start in 1979—the year also of the Iranian Revolution, which likewise ended in a Khomeini-type of counter-revolution!...

1) Theory & Action

THEORETICALLY, THE MOST important of the statements Bishop delivered when he was in the U.S. May 31-June 10, 1983, related to the two points he raised in the interview with the *Village Voice*.^{*} One concerned the question of "consciousness" of workers: "We tried to tell the people to use their own consciousness." The other point, in contrast to this, was the question of the consciousness of the leaders which had no such ambiguity as the one relating to the workers.

While we do not hear the thoughts of the workers, Bishop does trace the development of the leadership's consciousness in the 1950s and 1960s:

There have been periods when I was attracted to a lot of the cultural nationalist material, frankly Frantz Fanon, Malcolm, various people like that... I would say that the entire leadership of the party and the government came out of a black power tradition, all of us... I don't think we moved beyond that until the early 1970s...

Certainly by that time, outside of the cultural nationalist question, we were beginning to read a lot of the most classical socialist works, and beginning to move outside just the question of blackness, around to a materialist conception of the world.

Q: He's having an anniversary this year. [laughter] The cursed name has not passed your lips. I think it begins with M.

A: [Laughter] I'm trying not to say his name.

Laughingly or otherwise, consciously or unconsciously, what came through from "trying not to say" the name of Marx was not the simple matter of "tactics" when visiting the imperialist land they rightly feared might be planning an invasion. Rather, it was first to become clear that critical week between October 12 when the majority of the Central Committee voted to put Bishop under house arrest, and the savage, unconscionable, dastardly murder on the 19th of October as the masses struck for him and freed him from house arrest. That is what was inherent in what I referred to in the early part of this Letter, on what

^{*} The following quotations are from the interview with Bishop by James Ridgeway and Alexander Cockburn, which appeared in the *Village Voice*, June 28, 1983, under the title, "The Caribbean is Sitting on a Volcano."

both he and Castro called "non-interference in internal matters" as a "principle," when what was actually involved, however, was a battle of ideas on the decisive question of *Marx's* Marxism, instead of acting as if Cuba or Russia are *the* Marxists. In this way revolutionary methodology—the dialectics of revolution—gets reduced to "conception of leadership methods," and that is expressed as if a unified view permeated the entire leadership: "We feel that in many respects, Grenada is a true experiment in the whole theory and practice of socialism . . . If we succeed in this path . . . there are going to be a number of lessons for other small developing island states coming after us."

It is nearly impossible to gauge the great shock Maurice Bishop must have experienced October 19 as he became witness to the suddenly unbridgeable gulf of the Great Divide between leaders and ranks and *within* the leadership itself as the Party "turned the guns against the people" soon after they had freed him from house arrest. Soon his voice, too, was stilled by murder.

It is precisely that movement that compels us to re-evaluate those three decades of history Maurice Bishop had analyzed as his own self-development . . .

2) Responsibility of Revolutionary Marxists

THE OBJECTIVE AS WELL AS the subjective truth of these past 30 years spells out the birth of a new historic age of human development—a *movement from practice that is itself a form of theory*. This took the form in 1950 of posing totally new questions when the U.S. miners, confronted with a new mode of production, Automation, asked: "What kind of labor should man do? Why should there be a total division between thinking and doing?" The following year it took another form in Grenada, when a former oil-worker, the young Eric Gairy (a very different person from the Gairy after he was in power) organized what he called the Grenada Mental and Manual Workers Union. In 1952 the movement from practice took spontaneous shape in Latin America in the Bolivian Revolution, where the miners and the peasants fought as one to rid the country of dictatorship. In 1953 it was seen in East Germany when, for the very first time from under totalitarian Communism, the workers took to the streets against both "work-norms" and political tyranny, as they pulled down the statues of Stalin and demanded "Bread and Freedom!"

Whatever the form it took, the historic new that characterized all of these revolts and heralded a new theoretical departure was this: *the movement from practice is itself a new form of theory which gave the actions their direction.*

What none but Marxist-Humanists saw as the *transition point*

between the East German revolt of 1953, the outright Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and its philosophy was revealed in two seemingly unconnected events in 1955: 1) The Montgomery Bus Boycott opened the Black Revolution in the U.S. and inspired a new stage of revolution in Africa as well; 2) In Russia, there suddenly appeared, in the main theoretical Russian journal, *Questions of Philosophy* (Vol. 3, 1955), an academic-sounding article entitled "Marx's Working Out of the Materialist Dialectics in the Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts of the Year 1844." It was an attack on Marx's Humanist Essays, contending that the young Marx had not yet freed himself from Hegelian mysticism and its "negation of negation." What the state-capitalist rulers calling themselves Communists had become oppressively aware of was the mass unrest, especially in East Europe. What they feared most was a new uprising.

Simply put, although the Russian theoreticians chose to shroud the philosophic phrase in mysticism, ever since Marx had materialistically "translated" the Hegelian dialectic of negativity as the philosophy of revolution, "negation of the negation" stood for an actual revolution. What the Russians feared most is exactly what erupted in Hungary in 1956. And it was the Hungarian Revolution that removed the young Marx's Humanist Essays from the dusty archives and brought them onto the living historic stage, so that all became witness to Marx's first discovery of a whole new continent of thought which he had called "a new Humanism," and which spelled out Reason *and* Revolution.

As against the tired Western intellectuals who designated the decade of the 1950s as the "end of ideology," that period was in fact the threshold to a whole new Third World and a whole new generation of revolutionaries. By then, there was, indeed, no part of the world—from Africa to the U.S., from East Europe to Latin America—where the movements had not declared themselves to be Humanist. We should not forget that Castro, too, in a televised speech to the nation on May 26, 1959, had declared Cuba's revolution to have been "Humanist." A great deal more profoundly, in 1961, Frantz Fanon—who never stopped at mere sloganeering, and who had thrown away his French citizenship to integrate himself into the Algerian Revolution—developed a total philosophy of Humanism as both a world concept and a fact in his magnificent *The Wretched of the Earth*.

The 1960s were certainly filled with activity, activity, activity. Theoretically, however, what really predominated was the search for short-cuts to revolution. Each attempt resulted in the transforming of a country's particular experience into a "universal." In the case of Mao—who, with the success of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, became the inspiration for all guerrilla fighters—his rhetoric about "continuous revolution" was truncated by: 1) its confinement within the framework of the Thought of Mao; and 2) the peasant army surrounding the cities,

tionary *praxis*, to "leadership methods," whatever that means. Without a philosophic vision, much less listening to the voices from below, all the majority of the Central Committee in Grenada could come up with was being opposed to the alleged "one-man rule" of Bishop, whom they hurried to expel from the Party and put under house arrest—without any thought about the consequences, either from the masses whom Bishop had led since the 1979 Revolution, or from the imperialist enemy poised for invasion. Unfortunately, Bishop, who did enjoy the confidence of the masses and was, indeed, freed from house arrest by them, had not dug into the differing tendencies *within* those who held "a materialist conception of the world." He had not brought into the consciousness of the masses nor shared with international colleagues the disputes which were wreaking havoc in revolutionary Grenada . . .

3) Conflicting Tendencies in the Caribbean Left

Long before the Grenada counter-revolution Bukka Rennie had discussed "The Conflicting Tendencies in the Caribbean Revolution." He goes so far in concretizing the objective situation that he not only concludes with the theory of state-capitalism, but shows that "the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) has long since become a bureaucratized elitist party which *in fact is the vanguard of a new class formation.*"

When one has been that comprehensive in the study of the objective *world* situation, developing it over 22 pages to show that Stalinism is indeed a new, *non-working class, enemy* "class formation"—state-capitalism, how can one nevertheless conclude that when it comes to the concrete situation in the Caribbean ("in Trinidad and Tobago"), Caribbean Stalinism and Revolutionary Marxism "are not hostile to each other . . ."

The theoretician had not been able to move from what he was *against* (Stalinism) to what he was *for*—how to begin anew. Though Rennie's movement in Trinidad did call itself *New Beginning*, he evaded the task of philosophically restating Marxism for one's own age, on the grounds of all the new Humanist beginnings of the Third World. Instead, he shifted the whole responsibility for that to the shoulders of the proletariat, to "practice"—when it has been precisely the movement from practice which has shown itself to be a form of theory by raising all these new points of departure, and which demands that the theoreticians meet that challenge.

Rennie does say that, instead of the elitist party, the New Beginning Movement prefers not to declare itself to be the Party. But is it just a

* Bukka Rennie's article appeared in the *Pan African Journal*, issued from Nairobi, East Africa, Summer 1975, Volume 2.

question of form of organization as against the Single Party State that has kept us shackled? Isn't the key to the present question of the dialectics of revolution and of thought the battle of ideas not merely among the leadership but within the masses who think their own thoughts? The new relationship of practice to theory is rooted in what workers do and what they think. The aim is to achieve a new unity of theory and practice. Not only did the 1970s' revolts not achieve that, but in Grenada the differences among the leaders ended in outright murder.

Bukka Rennie placed the Black Power movement of the 1960s on the same level as the 1917 Russian Revolution—totally ignoring the fact that it not only never reached the profound depth and breadth of November 1917, but that none had even attempted the kind of philosophic reorganization Lenin did when he broke with his own philosophic past and articulated Marx's view of smashing the bourgeois state to smithereens, recreating Marx's work on the Paris Commune and *Critique of the Gotha Program* for his own age as *State and Revolution*.

Clearly, it is C.L.R. James' theory* which Bukka Rennie is expounding. . . What we are now confronted with is the stark fact that in Grenada keeping quiet about differences within the leadership was resolved with the savage, brutal, irrational, counter-revolutionary murder of the leader. It is true that a small part of the search for shortcuts reflected the workers' impatience to do away with the exploitative, racist, imperialist society. But the greater truth is that, like all intellectuals, those leaders suffered from the preoccupation of all elitists—giving the answer "for" the workers. It meant an evasion of theory as well as of the fact that the movement from practice is a form of theory.

* Since I wrote this analysis of Grenada, C.L.R. James has both come out with an analysis of Grenada (*Communist Affairs*, July 1984) and granted an interview on the Caribbean (*Third World Book Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1984), called "An Audience with C.L.R. James." The *Communist Affairs* article reveals how adept is James at saying two opposite things in the very same breath. Thus, he refers to the original 1979 revolution as "a great revolution," "never before in the Caribbean," and in the same article says that 1979 "was not a revolutionary action," and that it was due only to the fact that the leaders of the New Jewel Movement had heard that Gairy had ordered their murders and "Therefore, they, in order to avert themselves from being killed, took power . . ."

The fact that, by 1983, we were witness to the shooting of one leader, Bishop, by another, Coard, and that this murder meant shooting directly into the mass movement that had spontaneously mobilized in defense of Bishop, only brought James to the fantastically Bonapartist conclusion: "A mass movement above all needs leadership, and if the political leader does not give it, people turn to another organization, often the Army. The army consists of organization—commanders, lieutenants, majors, etc."

James does not limit that type of empty generalization on leadership and organization to the Caribbean. No, this man is, rhetorically, a man of global vision, at least desire. This 1938

It is this which we traced through the actual revolts of the early 1950s as we greeted the three new paths to freedom that were seen in the Hungarian Revolution, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the revolts in the Russian forced labor camps in Vorkuta. *Marxism and Freedom* was structured on the movement from practice not alone in our age but from the age of revolutions 1776, 1789—and on the Hegelian dialectic from then to today. What predominated, however, was the question that tore at the vitals of all revolutionary movements: "What Happens After" power is achieved. The decentralized committee form instead of the vanguard "Party to Lead" seemed to be the answer. We found that, however, to be only part of the answer once the turbulent 1960s and their decentralized activism led only to unfinished revolutions because it was devoid of philosophy.

In *Philosophy and Revolution*, where we returned to the Hegelian dialectic in and for itself and to Marx's dialectics of revolution, we tried to articulate "Why Hegel? Why Now?" for our age. And it was the 1970s, which finally revealed Marx's work as a *totality*, that led to the return to Marx's Marxism—Marx's, *not Engels'*; Marx's, *not Lenin's*; Marx's, *not Mao's nor its variant, Castro's*. In a word, Marx's "revolution in permanence" is ground not alone for theory but also for organization.

There can be no successful revolution without an historic sense both of past and present, of a battle of ideas, a clearing of heads not for any academic purpose but with full realization that a serious Marxist discussion is needed as *preparation for revolution* and its deepening once the first act of overthrow of the old has been achieved. When, instead, revolutionary methodology is reduced to "leadership methods," individual or collective, the very basis not only of theory but of the revolution itself has been lost. That is what happened in Grenada.

—Raya Dunayevskaya
November 28, 1983

author of *Black Jacobins* denies in 1984 his African roots. In what the *Third World Book Review* called "an audience" with him, we read: "I do not know what are the African roots of the language and culture of the Caribbean intellectuals. I am not aware of the African roots of my use of the language and culture. . . . We of the Caribbean have not got an African past. We are black in skin, but the African civilization is not ours. The basis of our civilization in the Caribbean is an adaptation of western civilization."

As I wrote in 1959, when he was writing panegyrics of Nkrumah, "who has, single-handed, outlined a program based on the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Gandhi":

I admit that combining Marx, Lenin and Gandhi is quite a feat. But for a pamphleteer like J.R. Johnson [C.L.R. James] who thundered so for the Soviet United States of Europe, Soviet United States of Asia, world revolution, the struggle against bureaucracy 'as such,' the self-mobilization of the masses and for new passions and new forces to reconstruct society on totally new beginnings—to end with Nkrumah as the representative of the new, the new, is rather pathetic. There is nothing to add but to say, with Hamlet, "Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him" [See my *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions, News & Letters*, 1959; reprinted with new introduction, 1984.]

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Afterword

Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 1985-86

*Excerpts from Report to Plenum of News and Letters Committees,
by the National Chairwoman, Raya Dunayevskaya, August 31, 1985*

I. Hitler's Visage in Apartheid South Africa Shows the Future the Rulers Hold in Store for All of Us

LEST ANYONE THINK THAT somehow I will be straying from world events and the Big Powers—the two nuclear Behemoths, Russia and the U.S.—in a fairy-land of their own, toying with the most phantasmagoric Star Wars project, let me tell you why today I begin so differently than in the Draft Perspectives. That started with the latest happenings concerning the new ruler in Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev. At the present moment, however, because the Civil War in South Africa rages on, demanding action rather than just description of "how" Gorbachev and Reagan are toying with nuclear war for the future, we must begin with the new reality.

The difference in the beginnings of the two—the Draft Thesis and the actual Plenum Thesis—is necessitated by the barbaric ideology which is not restricted to the South African rulers. Our rulers are also trying to foist this on us. That ideology is not just rhetoric, but the depth of the barbarism that began with the rise of Hitler, and which was by no means destroyed by the Allies' victory in World War II. It was Hitler's defeat that scared the Afrikaners whose dream today is still expressed by those bigoted, savage whites in these terms: "There should have been a Hitler in every country, but unfortunately this was no longer possible in a 'sophisticated' world that has even abolished the cane in prison."^{*}

It was only in 1950—and not, as most people think, from the beginning of the cutting up of Africa—that apartheid first became law. It is true that South Africa was colonized in the 19th century when the

^{*} See "The Fire This Time," by Neal Ascherson, a review of *Waiting: The Whites of South Africa*, by Vincent Crapanzano, *New York Review of Books*, July 17, 1985.

Western imperialist world decided to cut it up as a base for its capitalist development. Conditions for Black South Africa were bad enough when England walked off with that prize. They became worse still when the Boers, still calling themselves the Dutch Reformed Church, became the dominant power there. They practiced apartheid, though they had not made it the law of the land. It was only after the end of World War II, after Hitler's Germany was defeated—and then Japanese militarism was defeated by the unleashing of the first atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—that South Africa embarked on an official apartheid, first in 1948 and then fully in law in 1950.

What happened after the victory of the Allies, which is directly related to the present world situation, is that they were left so exhausted they could not extend World War II at that moment. What they did, instead, was to place a lot of markers pointing to where the next war could start, by creating two Germanics, two Vietnams, two Koreas, and two Europes—the East dominated by Russia, and the West by the U.S.

Let us now turn to the true history of the civil wars that the Blacks have fought against the whites there. At the very period when the 1905 Revolution erupted in Russia, and its ramifications embraced Iran as well as China, we had, as well, the great Zulu Rebellion in South Africa. Read how it was anticipated in the mass struggles of 1903-05 and after, in *Time Longer Than Rope*, by Edward Roux.

Today, the undeclared Civil War in South Africa is still thought of only as protest. This makes it easy to "sympathize" with the marchers who are unarmed, facing the barbaric might of the South African rulers—not only armed to the teeth, but not satisfied unless they also show their savagery with horsewhips and murder. Every revolt for the past 30 years in apartheid South Africa faces genocide, and yet the revolts, far from stopping, are reborn in ever more intense forms. The world had better recognize that it's not only a matter of the 1970s, when Soweto finally made it conscious not alone of revolt but of the *philosophy* of revolt.

The Idea—Black Consciousness—was born out of Pan-Africanism, whose ground had been laid by the new, independent countries of West, East, North and Central Africa, whose revolutions were reshaping the map of the whole world. Pan-Africanism saw in this new colleagues from new movements for freedom. But Pan-Africanism insisted that the "political kingdom," as Nkrumah expressed it, was inadequate unless South Africa was freed and a new Azania was born. Just as Pan-Africanism separated itself at that moment from the African National Congress (ANC), because the latter made a Universal out of the tactic of non-violence, though the rulers there were the most violent rulers in the world, so the Black Consciousness Movement of the mid-1970s expressed the new humus, as spoken by Steve Biko before he was

brutally murdered: "This [Black Consciousness] must be related to the emancipation of the entire continent of Africa since World War II..."

Everyone knows Soweto, 1976, because it was this that was not just a stage of struggle but a quantum leap into revolutionary method and ideas that inspired a Soweto youth to proclaim: "Go and tell the world that the process of Black Liberation, which nobody can reverse, has begun in South Africa..." The struggle didn't end in the 1970s, either. What the 1970s were great in was the birth of a great new Black trade union movement...

II. U.S. Counter-Revolutionary Political as Well as Economic Impact on El Salvador and Nicaragua

RONALD REAGAN, IN REFUSING to endorse the UN resolution on sanctions against South Africa, manifests the close affinity he has to that apartheid land, as he moves against the masses, be they in the U.S., in Nicaragua, or in South Africa...

Look at Latin America, especially at El Salvador, where Reagan's propaganda would have us believe so much has changed since Duarte came to power and the alleged democracy of the elections reversed the trend of the civil war there, bringing about "dialogue" with the rebels. The truth is that there is absolutely no fundamental change whatever.

Land reform is dead, but the death squads are not. Joblessness and underemployment remain endemic, the conditions of life keep deteriorating, even as housing needs are neglected and so are hospitals and clinics. Recently, innumerable demonstrations and strikes displayed exceptional boldness. Peasants as well as students, unionists as well as unemployed, expressed the critique of the Duarte government. Not only did 6,000 students and professors of the National University parade from the campus past the National Palace to the Treasury, but unionists, too, had their demonstrations, and during the weekend of July 6, peasants converged on San Salvador.

What every ruler—especially U.S. imperialism with its tentacles in Latin America—refuses to face is the simple truth and plain fact that the counter-revolutionary outreach into foreign lands is precisely what produces revolutionaries. It is that struggle against imperialism that forges revolutionary leadership.

In the case of Nicaragua, the U.S. never stopped invading until the one the Nicaraguan masses have rightly called "the last Marine"—Somoza—succeeded in murdering the rebel leader, Sandino...

Instead of listing all of Ronald Reagan's lies, let us turn to the indigenous revolutionary voices from below in Nicaragua. Omar Cabezas, in his memoirs, *Fire From the Mountain: The Making of a Sandinista*, tells the story of an 82-year-old peasant he met in the

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mountains of Nicaragua, who showed what had been kept hidden for some 35 years—some bullets from Sandino he had kept in gleaming conditions because, as the peasant put it, "I knew the Sandinistas would come again."

This is but one story. Many more can be and are being told, whether it is from Sandinistas or from an American professor of Latin American and U.S. diplomatic history at the University of Georgia, Lester Langley, who relates all the facts from the first landing of the Marines in Nicaragua to our age in *Central America: The Real Stakes*. The truth is that the Reagan Administration story is a reactionary ideologue's fabric of lies to "justify" the overthrow of the legitimate government of Nicaragua.

That does not mean that there is nothing to criticize in the present-day Sandinistas, nor that they are not forced by the imperialist policies of the U.S. to seek the support of Russia or any other country that will help their struggle for independence. But the unvarnished fact is that there was an indigenous, genuine, revolutionary, mass movement which succeeded in overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship; which has introduced the beginnings of truly independent life, in its land reform, better conditions for the workers, and successful fight against illiteracy; and which is continuing the opposition to any U.S. domination over their land.

Finally, let's return to what the two nuclear superpowers are doing with their accumulation of 50,000 nuclear warheads, more than enough to destroy, over and over again, civilization as we have known it. In trying to see whether Reagan and Gorbachev can, at their November meeting, stop themselves from plunging all of us to perdition, let's take a second look at the new man at the helm in Russia. Gorbachev stole the march on our retrogressionist ideologue by declaring that he would start, on Hiroshima Day, a unilateral cessation of nuclear tests, which would continue for five months, and continue after that if the U.S. joined the moratorium.

Ronald Reagan could come up with nothing comparable, and once again, the media itself has become so brainwashed that the Gorbachev announcement—which a retired Rear Admiral (who is now deputy director of the private organization, Center for Defense Information), Eugene J. Carroll, has called "the only significant arms control development since SALT II"—has become a "non-event": "In an alarming display of unanimity, the major American print and electronic news organizations have uncritically promoted the White House view that the Soviet initiative is nothing more than a propaganda ploy." (*New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1985)

In his analysis, Rear Admiral Carroll exposes also the falsity of Ronald Reagan's claim that Moscow broke the last test moratorium in

1961. There was no moratorium to break after President Eisenhower ended the 1958 moratorium. False also is the claim that Russia gained an advantage in the period 1961-63: the U.S. out-tested Russia nearly two-to-one (137 to 71, to be exact). As for 1985: "According to Energy Department announcements, America has conducted nine tests, the Soviet Union only four, in all of 1985. . . America, with about 765 tests, retains a solid lead over the Soviet Union with 564."

And just in case any human being remains alive, the latest savage experimentation now going on is "research" on chemical weapons, internationally forbidden ever since World War I. . .

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*Excerpts from Report to Resident Editorial Board Expanded Meeting,
December 29, 1985*

JUST AS STEVE BIKO in 1976 had spoken of his affinity with Frantz Fanon's philosophy and the American Black dimension, so Charles Denby, in 1978, quoted Biko both in the new edition of his autobiography, *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, and in his introduction to the first edition of *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought*. As a matter of fact, the whole question of sensitivity to language and the Black dimension is what led us to include the essays by Depestre and Ngugi as Appendices in the new edition.

The 1985 Labor Day Plenum of News and Letters Committees coincided with the time when the Black majority's continuous revolts in South Africa succeeded in so shaking South Africa's apartheid ruling regime that it savagely plunged into undeclared Civil War against the unarmed majority. This, in turn, only succeeded in making translucent to the whole world the dauntless courage of the Black masses in this confrontation. The international impact is deepening. The solidarity of the world masses with the African Freedom Fighters is not alone with their bravery, but with the goals, the philosophy, of their revolution. The ramifications of that type of solidarity led to the "shock of recognition" that that visage of Hitler is by no means limited to South Africa's Botha regime. Rather, that visage characterizes state-capitalism, from Russia to the U.S., especially *Reagan's U.S.* with its apologetics for Botha that Reagan has the gall to call "active constructive engagement."

The presence of Hitler's visage in all state-capitalist imperialisms became pivotal to Marxist-Humanist Perspectives for 1985-86. It determined the October 1985 Lead article in *News & Letters*, "The undeclared and ongoing civil war in South Africa," which followed the Labor Day Plenum proposal to transform *News & Letters* into a

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biweekly that would continue to be inseparable from our philosophic challenge to all post-Marx Marxists. Objectively and subjectively, the need is to continuously concretize Marx's Humanism for our age. . .

Marx had proceeded in his last decade to call attention to his substantial additions to the French edition of *Capital*—especially on the Fetishism of Commodities in Chapter I, and in the last Part on the Accumulation of Capital. At the same time, remember, this is the period after the Paris Commune, when he wrote his *Critique of the Gotha Program*; studied what was then a "new science," Anthropology, especially Morgan's *Ancient Society*; and wrote his *Ethnological Notebooks*. From all of this he drew the following conclusions about what we now call the Third World:

- 1) The multilinear view of human development reveals—whether in the Iroquois in the U.S., or in the "Oriental Commune," or the Western peasant—that there are other paths to revolution;
- 2) The peasants and the women are revolutionary forces as well as the proletariat;
- 3) Revolution may come first in a technologically backward land before the industrially advanced West Europe.

Standing on Marx's Marxist ground and reason for a new relationship of theory to practice, Marxist-Humanism saw in the new moments of Marx in the 1880s a trail to the 1980s. Our tasks *begin* there, but that is not where they end. It is the todayness that has to be worked out anew in each epoch, rooted in the concreteness of the new age. That cannot be anticipated; it must be worked out anew by the new generation of revolutionaries.

That is not just rhetoric, as can be seen in the recent communication we received directly from a group of South African revolutionaries:

We can understand why the Marxist-Humanists felt a need to call themselves not just Marxists but Marxist-Humanists, because the humanism has been removed from Marx to such an extent that people thought they could come with certain theories and ideas just from the top—the intellectuals theorizing and telling the people how to liberate themselves.

The search for a philosophy of revolution to break through the crisis in thought remains a unifying force in the relationship of Marx to the Black world.

Marx, Marxist-Humanism & the Black World

"The contradictory foundation of American Civilization, its Achilles heel is enclosed *not* in the 'general' class struggle, but in the *specifics* of the 'additive' of color. Precisely because of this, the theory of liberation must be as comprehensive as when Marx unfurled the banner of humanism."

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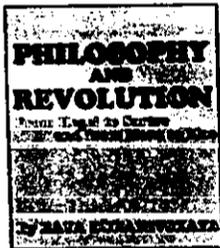
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